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IN THE MIST

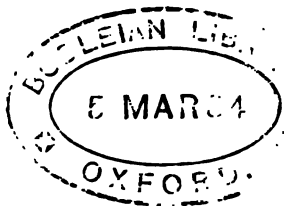


BY ROSE PORTER



"A quick change came over her face, as she leaned on her alpenstock, still looking at the mist."—*P.* 119.

IN THE MIST.



BY

ROSE PORTER,

AUTHOR OF

"SUMMER DRIFTWOOD FOR THE WINTER FIRE," ETC

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PRELUDE.

*"Fog-wreaths of doubt in blinding eddies drifted,
Whirlwinds of fancy, countergusts of thought,
Shadowless shadows where warm lives were sought,
Numb feet, that feel not their own tread, uplifted
On clouds of formless wonder, lightning-rifted!
What marvel that the whole world's life should seem
To helpless intellect, a Brahma-dream,
From which the real and restful is out-sifted!
Through the dim storm a white peace-bearing Dove
Gleams, and the mist rolls back, the shadows flee,
The dream is past : a clear calm sky above,
Firm rock beneath ; a royal scrolled tree,
And One, thorn-diademed, the King of Love,
The Son of God who gave Himself for me."*

I.

“ I opened the door of my heart. And behold,
There was music within, and a song.
But while I was hearkening, lo, blackness without, thick and
strong,
Came up and came over, and all that sweet fluting was drowned,
I could hear it no more ! ”

NILES ENDICOTT could not explain to himself how it all happened, much less to another. But the fact was this, that he, Doctor Niles Endicott—the days of whose life had slipped beyond the clinging touch of late-lingering youth, that will not let go of the first three decades of a man's years — he, Niles Endicott, who had for so long been content in his bachelor home, with thrifty Mrs. Blinn for housekeeper, suddenly found the once cheerful rooms cheerless ; the once coveted seclusion loneliness ; the aforesaid satisfying companionship of books and study unsatisfying ; and, all

A

because of a voice that was like music to him, a smile that was like a sunbeam.

Yet, how could he win that voice to sing in his home, that smile to beam brightness and joy there?

Doctor Endicott, though he was a man wont to well consider the why and how of his desires, and their accomplishment, did not long ponder that question.

No, he straightway found the answer, as thousands have done before him; for, somehow, love teaches what knowledge seeks in vain.

Thus, only a brief six months after Nanette Jay's arrival in G——, in the parish church the marriage service was read; the sacred promise to love and cherish uttered in Niles Endicott's clear ringing tones; the echo-promise murmured in Nanette's low, trembling, bird-like voice; and a minute later, they went out, man and wife; the minister had said, "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

•

II.

Then began for Niles Endicott a life beautiful as a dream, but alas ! as brief.

Nanette was but a young thing, a mere child in comparison with that middle-aged man, who yet held her lightest word, her slightest deed, in honour.

There was nothing too fair, too good for his heart to liken her to ; she was as a flower to him, a song-bird, a sunbeam, and, that she should of her own free will, sing, blossom, and shine for him, was a never-ceasing wonder to Doctor Endicott.

Perhaps,—we cannot tell,—if that one golden unshadowed year of wedded joy had widened into a long stretch of years, marked as years must be by the cares and sorrows of life,—perhaps, Niles Endicott might have rudely wakened from his dream to find this child-wife of his, this young creature of the morning, unfit for the wear and tear of midday.

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Be this as it may, he was never tried; for as birds cease their songs when morning melts into noon; as flowers go to sleep at set of sun; as sunbeams are dimmed by the uprising mists of earth, so their first year of life together had scarce bridged into a second, when there came a day, when Doctor Endicott—though he loved her so, though she was as dear to him as his life—stood by Nanette's side powerless to stay the wild fever throbbing through her veins; powerless to hinder the swift approach of that call, to which no mortal man or woman, try they ever so hard, can say, Nay.

III.

It was all over by nightfall; strangers and friends passing Doctor Endicott's door knew the sad truth, that in that dwelling there had been, that day, the One who never goes away alone!

But neither stranger nor friend knew the grief of the man who sat with bowed head,

through the silent hours of the night, by Nanette's still form,—striving—so vainly striving, to follow her flight into that unknown land from whose silence his cries could win no answer, whose mystery his thoughts could not solve.

“ Strange, is it not ? that of the myriads who
Before us pass the door of Darkness through,
Not one returns, to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too.”

Even Mrs. Blinn, who had been used to the Doctor's ways for years, never half guessed how the light of life went out for him the day Nanette died,—how for him, the joy of

“ Its story was all read,
And the giver had turned the last page.”

IV.

There was another watch kept in Doctor Endicott's home that night ; for as one life, the mother's, had passed from earth to heaven,

there had come, from heaven to earth, the child's.

Yes, that day,—the saddest day of all the days of Niles Endicott's life, was the birthday of his daughter Elizabeth.

IN THE MIST.



I.

“SO you have decided, Doctor Endicott, that the child is to be called Elizabeth? A grave name, I must say, for the wee lassie, my little lady-bird!”

And the expression of good-natured Mrs. Blinn’s countenance as nearly approached a frown as was possible, while across Doctor Endicott’s face played the hint of a smile, as he replied: “Yes, quite decided, Mrs. Blinn. Why do you object to the name Elizabeth? It certainly admits of variations enough, to suit well-nigh every ideal your heart may crave to have personated by the name of the little maiden.”

And having thus settled the matter, Doctor Endicott resumed the reading of the morning paper.

But Mrs. Blinn could not so easily leave the question ; in fact, if ever she felt inclined to be vexed with the Doctor, it was then, for the naming of the child had become a sensitive subject to her.

Then, too, all the love and poetry ; the tender homely pathos of Mrs. Blinn's heart, had centred around this motherless child, and no name could have been too beautiful, too high-sounding, to have pleased the seemingly commonplace old housekeeper, whose outward appearance gave no clue to her poem-like aspirations for the child's future.

Even when she was busy with the daily household duties, the ever-recurring sweeping and dusting, she was dreaming day-dreams of Elizabeth ; dreams as beautiful and numberless as the opening flower-buds of spring.

And now,—to have her desire for a name like melody for sound ; a picture for association ; a poem for song, all set aside by

Doctor Endicott's irrevocable decision : "The name is Elizabeth."

"What did he mean," the old woman queried, "by saying, 'It admitted of variations'? Did he suppose she would let the little blossom be called, Lib, Libby, or Liz?"

And, as was very apt to be the case with Mrs. Blinn in times of perplexity, no sooner had she accomplished her morning tasks, than she started forth to consult Mrs. Grant, the minister's wife, as to what Doctor Endicott's words meant.

In reply to Mrs. Blinn's question :

"By what now might one shorten, and lighten the name Elizabeth?" Mrs. Grant had suggested a bewildering list of titles starting with Bess and Bessie, ending with Lizette and Lizzie, and interluded by Lillie and Lisbeth.

The good lady, at the same time, throwing in, by way of parenthesis, her idea of the character the different appellations seemed to portray.

And strange to say, Mrs. Blinn, though the child was scarce more than a twelvemonth old, could not fail to see in her some similarity to each of Mrs. Grant's definitions, till verily she felt half frightened as to what the little Elizabeth would be in girl and womanhood, if in babyhood she were so complex a creature.

Indeed, Mrs. Blinn went home, saying to herself, "Who ever would have thought there was so much in a name!"—words she repeated many and many a time afterward.

And, just because of that much, spite her sense of dissatisfaction with Doctor Endicott's decision, as she pondered it, she came to feel a certain importance in it; she fell, too, as the child's varying moods suggested, into the way of using now one, and then another of the many titles; that, according to Mrs. Grant, fringed the name Elizabeth as rose leaves fringe the heart of the rose; wondering, too, in an undefined way, what gave a flower its name, its heart, or its leaves!

In the case of Elizabeth, there was some-

thing very appropriate in all this, for she was verily a many-sided little creature, of moods as complex, and changes of temper as sudden, as April sunshine and shower.

And when childhood glided into maidenhood it was still the same with her ; for one hour, she was a queen Bess, holding imperious queendom over all who came within her sway. The next, the grave Elizabeth, striving in vain to solve "the mystery of the heart that beats so wild, so deep in us," to know whence we come, and where we go.

And then, again, she seemed a very lily-bell among maidens, "so innocent-arch, so cunning-simple," were her winsome ways, or straightway, she was laughing Beth, or coquettish Lisette, of whom none could tell

"Whether smile or frown be fleetest,
Whether smile or frown be sweetest."

But oftenest she was just Lisbeth,—sweet
Lisbeth, whom

"None looked upon but he straightway thought
Of all the greenest depths of country cheer,

And into each one's heart was freshly brought
What was to him the sweetest time of year.
So was her every look and motion fraught.
With out-of-door delights and forest lere ;
Not the first violet on a woodland lea
Seemed a more visible gift of spring than she."

II.

THE early life of the little Elizabeth was like the flowers, as free and unfettered.

In truth, to Doctor Endicott she was a flower, his Lily-bell he called her, his

“Lily-bud, not opened quite,
That hourly grew more pure and white.”

Called her, with a tenderness in his tone, a smile on his grave face, that made the words ever after dear to Elizabeth, with the sweet echo-charm of a sound that holds thoughts of childhood.

Her first memory-pictures were all simple, yet they were all touched with the wonders of the world!

Spring coming after winter, sunshine after rain,—wonders that have puzzled many a wiser head than hers. For, who can explain the mystery,—“Except a corn of wheat fall into

the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

Who can explain it?

Doctor Endicott was wont to be a silent man among men; but when with the child he had words many and eloquent, and thus he educated her in the broad "charity which thinketh no evil,"—at least, as much as one can educate another in that charity which only the Christ-like heart can truly know.

Elizabeth's father educated her, too, in the lore of Nature as unconsciously as a flower opens to the sunshine; and from babyhood her young heart thrilled with love and tenderness for the song-birds, and the flowers, and the outer world of beauty.

She had only known kindness, thus she was ignorant of fear. The wildest wind among the tree-tops was a song to her; storm-clouds only meant rain to make the flowers grow; and when the storm-banks were the heaviest, she knew if but one rift broke them, the sunset-glory would be all the brighter for their darkness; and in her childhood she never guessed it

was all a parable,—a sign in the sky—but afterwards she knew.

She loved the still moonlight too; loved to run far into the shadows cast by the great trees down by the garden gate, and then out again with a song of joy,—out into the unshadowed moonshine,—and she never guessed that too was a parable!

But best of all, Lisbeth loved the murmur of the waves as they crept up and on the sandy beach of the low-lying shore, down below the cliff, for the sea was like a friend to her, a friend growing dearer with every passing year; from the time when she first clapped her tiny hands with delight at the sun-kissed wavelets, till the hour when she called the dancing waves fairies, and on, to after hours, when she had learned the deep significance of their undertone calmness, even amid the wild commotion of the upper waters.

It is said that “romance is often commoner in real life than the commonplace;” certain it is that those hours of her childhood spent with her father, were tinged with a glow of beauty

and delight to Elizabeth Endicott, that framed them all the after years of her life in a halo of no commonplace radiance.

But she came at last to the awakening hour, for "children never live very long, when they are not carried away in little coffins and laid in the silent grave; they become transformed, so that we lose them in another way." And yet, though the child was lost to those who loved her, she herself never could lose the possession of that time when so true of her were the poet's words, "Heaven lies about us in our infancy." So true, that not till her summers counted eighteen, did "shades of the prison-house" begin to darken; and after that, well!—she knew many a summer, and many a winter, before she found that other Heaven, the kingdom of God within the heart. For, it is written, "The kingdom of God is within you."—"The kingdom of God! Not our kingdom but His. There lies the secret," which only becomes an "open-secret" as the heart of childhood, or maturer years, softly pleads, "Lord, with me abide," only as the heart of

faith hears the tender assurance, "Lo, I am with you."

Eighteen summers! It was a goodly space of time for Lisbeth to be growing thus:

"Like the plants, from unseen roots,
In tongue-tied spring."

What would she utter when the summer speech came to her? When the budding-time opened into the blooming? Would she

"Bear through sorrow wrong and ruth
In her heart the dew of youth,
On her lips the smile of truth"?

Neither the grave man, her father, nor the kindly housekeeper, who loved her so well, could tell; for let fancy weave as it will futures for our dearest, only to-morrow can tell to-morrow's story; and whoever caught to-morrow.

III.

SOMETHING of the same contradictoriness, that in its many variations Elizabeth Endicott's name held, pervaded also her home, and the influences that there surrounded her.—A blending of the strictly prosaic with the poetic.

In her home this was manifested in well-nigh every room, for though we no longer set up our household gods in tangible form of sculptured marble or pictured saint, yet they hold sway as much nowadays as ever they did, and we every one of us, whether or not we recognise the truth, open glimpses into our hearts and tastes by our surroundings.

Mute signs of graceful fancies, love of colour, beauty of form, and harmony of outline, hinted at, perchance, by mere trifles, yet that indicate what we really are, as surely as the finger on the dial points to the hour.

So strong was the individuality of Doctor Endicott, in his home the love of literature, as well as of the beautiful and ideal, were everywhere evident; even though at certain seasons of the year practical Mrs. Blinn draped statuette and bronze, pictures and mirrors, in billowy folds of tarletan and netting.

And by such prudent care-taking, spite all her day-dreams for Elizabeth's future, Mrs. Blinn, in a certain way, assumed the form of the prose of life to the young girl, while the hours spent with her father were like Idyls for beauty and gladness.

In truth, Mrs. Blinn was a most prosaic enforcer of old-time rules, and the child was early drilled in the mysteries of household duties as well as in the old-fashioned tasks of hemming and stitching.

Indeed, she was a swift, dexterous little needle-woman, even before she had reached her teens. She had, too, from childhood, that instinctive grace of touch which is the heritage of some women, the power to find and bring out beauty from the seemingly unbeautiful.

A rare gift from heaven, and surely as much to be desired as beauty of feature, or grace of person; and it always met with favour from the kindly housekeeper, who found it in her heart to smile approval at "Lisbeth's ways," as she called them; even when she checked her by some commonplace word or comment.

It was an old mansion in which Doctor Endicott lived, the dwelling-place of his father and grandfather before him, and thus essentially a home.

A place made sacred by the benediction of the departed;—a place where lives, linked by ties of kindred, had for years met and crossed, something, as the angels on Jacob's ladder,—some going up, and some coming down.

The house stood in a shady garden, a rod or two back from the central street of the town. One of those old gardens where gnarled, weather-beaten trees cast shadows heavy and deep, and yet, a garden where there were sunny nooks all flower be-starred.

When the spring came, the shady places were so thick with violets and snowdrops the

child's feet trod among them, ankle deep, and in summer, in the sunny nooks, June roses nodded in rosy blush and deep-dyed crimson.

A winding walk from the front door led round to the eastern side of the house, where was Doctor Endicott's consulting-room, and opening out of it the library, with its wide window that filled almost one side of the room, and framed in the near view of the ocean bay and the cliff, with its narrow path leading down to the shore.

In front of the window grew an ash, its soft and dusky boughs seeming like a mystic veil as they flitted before the sea-prospect of waves, sparkling blue and crisp in the golden north wind of summer.

Just above the library was Lisbeth's own room, with a window wide as the one below. Reaching from it her little hands could touch the boughs of the ash, and many and many were the songs its leaves and the sea waves sang to her.

The broad-cushioned window seat in the library, as well as in her own room, were Lis-

beth's favourite haunts, though every part of the house was full of cheer to her.

In fact, on entering that old mansion, one felt an indescribable sense of unostentatious luxury. It was all so comfortable; the massive old furniture; the wide-seated chairs; the warm crimson hangings in drawing-room, library, and dining-room, gave such a sense of home to everything. There was, too, a pleasant, though mute companionship, looking out from the quaint portraits that hung on either side of the wide hall.

In every room there were open fireplaces, and so bright Mrs. Blinn had the shining globes of andirons, and the smooth surface of the fenders kept, they always held miniature pictures of the room.

Pictures that were like wonderful fairy stories to Lisbeth, who, as a child, used to rub her tiny fingers over the "shiny places;" wishing, as children will wish, for the impossible, that she could rub out the reflection of herself, and the room as it then looked, and see away back into the time when her father

was a boy, or those after days before God called her mother from earth.

But, no matter how hard she rubbed, the only pictures Lisbeth ever saw were just of the present ; for a child has no past.

In winter, hickory logs glowed and sparkled in those broad chimney-places, and in summer a fragrant odour came from the huge blue china pot-pourri jars that were placed in between the shining andirons, and back of the fence-like fenders; and somehow, those jars, with their odour of condensed sweetness, were like fairy stories too to Lisbeth; for, were they not full of last year's roses?

IV.

WHILE Lisbeth, as a child, loved every child she met, found a friend in every man and woman, she was yet much alone, as she was later on ; but she never felt it solitude, for her own happy thoughts were her companions, and thoughts that are born out of innocent joys are ever glad.

When she had exhausted Mrs. Blinn's stock of learning, masters came to teach her after the prescribed form of education, some successfully, and some unsuccessfully, according as they touched the responsive chord in her heart and mind, which, when rightly stirred, gave forth sweetest strains of harmony, but when jarred, was tuneless.

What she learned she never conquered by rule, and there were those who blamed Doctor Endicott for this, saying he failed to discipline her young mind.

Mrs. Blinn had many grave thoughts on the subject; no one knew as well as she that Lisbeth's temper had never been really tried, her will never really crossed, for, though as a child and young girl she had now and then slight troubles, they were no more like real trials than an April shower is like a rainy day. And Mrs. Blinn realised this want of early discipline might cause much future sorrow; yet she was too partial to confess her fear when it was hinted at by Mrs. Grant and others. Once she had said something of it to Doctor Endicott, but he straightway replied:

"The discipline will come in good time, and the self-control too; my little Lisbeth has plenty of force and character."

And Mrs. Blinn had no courage to pursue the topic then, or, in fact, ever to resume it. But Doctor Endicott did not forget, and more than once afterward he said to himself, with a sigh:

"A maiden is a tender thing,
And best by a mother understood."

And yet, his thoughtful care-taking for

Lisbeth in well-nigh every respect was equal to a mother's; he only failed in striving to make life all happiness to her, rather than preparing her, as a wise mother would have done, for the stern realities that must in a certain way, as years come and go, take the place of the ideal, for :

“ He who has not learned to know
How false its sparkling bubbles show,
How bitter are the drops of woe
With which its brim may overflow,
He has not learned to live.”

Lisbeth had an intense delight in colour, but “you can no more bind her to method than you can dictate a bird's flight,” her painting-master was wont to say as he watched her swift blending of wealth and brilliancy of hue, with delicate tint and shadowy outline.

Music, too, was a joy to her, and yet the little fingers that so lightly wandered over the ivory keys, bringing out melody, were fitful as fire-flies, dancing away from the prescribed harmony on the page open before her, even when her eyes were resting on it.

Almost from childhood she was as familiar with poets' songs as flowers are with sunshine, though it was even then the unwritten poems, lying all about her, that sang the sweetest songs to Lisbeth; just as later on it was the unwritten stories,—the short, sad stories which, like sand on the ocean beach, lie so thick about some hearts, some lives,—that told her sadder tales than ever she found on poet's page; those stories that bore the stamp of real life.

Doctor Endicott had a large practice. He loved his profession; his heart with every passing year had grown more sensitive to suffering rather than dulled by contact with it, more eager to relieve it as far as science could; and he never refused to go when sent for, though sometimes he was sought by dwellers far beyond the town limits.

It was a rich farming country all about G——, —and on the long drives which the Doctor so frequently took, Elizabeth was wont to be his sole companion, and those hours were the gladdest of all her glad hours. It was so

sweet to the loving daughter to be by her father's side as they drove through shady lanes, up wooded hills, or by the side of rich pasture or full harvest-fields; catching now and then, if the road were not too far inland, glimpses of the sparkling, dancing sea waves.

So sweet, for even when her father was silent, she knew he had not forgotten her, for when she looked up into his face he always smiled in response, and then she would nestle her hand into his, or lay it on his knee, with such a wonderful sense of safety and peace. When at last they came to their destination, and the old horse Robin, who could be so fleet of foot, so slow and moderate when there was no haste, was safely fastened to hitching-post or tree, and Doctor Endicott, with a smile and good-bye, left her, Lisbeth would lean back on the soft cushions of the chaise, and tell herself story after story about the patients her father had gone to visit,—stories that always had a bright ending, for father will make them well, she used to say to herself, with never a thought that there

might be suffering which he could not heal ; might be partings that his skill could not avert.

But, though her fancies were so many, she never asked questions about the people in the rooms behind the closed windows and drawn blinds, though sometimes her father would tell her of a sick child, and then on their next visit she would beg to take some picture-book, or toy, saying, when she was a little thing : " Please say, papa, it is from a very well little child to a sick one ; " and her father did not point out to her the harshness of the contrast held in the words, but she felt it for herself as she grew older, and then she changed her form of speech into : " Say your daughter, who feels so sorry for those who suffer, sends this, "—and, though Lisbeth thus spoke, she was, in truth, as much a stranger to suffering as she was to the contrast in her childhood's words ; for how can we know that which we have never felt ? But her father did not tell her that either.

V.

THERE is ever such sweetness in the record of a happy childhood; we would fain linger over Elizabeth Endicott's, but the years, spite their sweetness, sped on, and her story must not tarry behind them.

It is hard to go back and picture the youthful appearance of this maiden of our tale. It is so much more natural to describe her in the aftertime, when life had left its impress on face and voice, smile and manner, toning down the bright colours of sunrise into quiet twilight shades, hushing the joy-ringing song into a softer strain. For there is always the same difference between life in youth, and life when the meridian is crossed, that there is between sunrise and sunset. The bright hues and glory of the one, gradually melting into the full light of mid-day; the tender rays of the other, be

they ever so bright, softening and fading at last into darkness, or into everlasting morning. Which? Lisbeth was not called beautiful even in her youth, and yet no one ever looked at her without longing to look again; she possessed so singularly the something that words will not tell; the subtle charm that made one think of poets' dreams and artists' visions.

In her gladness she seemed like the Aphrodite of Greek mythology, who rose out of the sea, as the fable runs, and hastened with rosy feet to the land, where grasses and flowers sprang up beneath her light tread.

In her thoughts she had only caught echoes of the real life that men and women must live, if they would be what God meant them to be. It was spring-time to her—and in the spring-time of life, “hopes they turn like marigolds to the sunny side.”

In her daily life she was a sweet and happy thing, the joy of her home, and yet the only picture there is of her then is of a tall, slender maiden, graceful as a lily-bell, sweet eyes,

rare blue eyes, that looked lovingly on all whom she met, eyes that even then had tender depths in them, rose-bud lips that wore the "soft dimple of a musing smile." Yes, this is the only picture of her, except the later one, when her aforetime glad smile had given place to the look which made her face so tender and thoughtful, when her eyes shone with that nameless light which only comes when a soul has toiled up to the very hill-top of self-abnegation, for only on the summit of that Upland is learned "the holy secret of the impersonal life—only to remember one's trials in prayer."

Sometimes when life presses sore, when troubles beat about us like storm-tossed waves on rocky shore, we cry out of our very bitterness—Can we ever know that peace, ever reach that summit?

Then it is that lives such as Elizabeth Endicott's, stormy lives, shadowed by years of doubting, of loneliness and pain, answer, "Yes, you can reach that height, though the way be long and rough, for Christ said: "My grace is

sufficient'—yes, you can know that calm, for 'there is a summer land where it is always peace, where the soul is nevermore alone, because God is there.'

Harkening to these answers, we seem to know what those forty years meant to the man of God,—those wilderness years that led to Pisgah's mount,—and yet, like the disciples of old, whose feet were on the very summit of the Transfiguration hill, when we "enter the cloud," to learn this lesson,—“we fear”—fear even though we know, “out of the cloud the Voice sounded,” even though we know Jesus will come to us, as He did to them, saying, “Be not afraid.”

“ Oh, for a light from Heaven,
Clear and divine,
Now on the paths before us
Brightly to shine !
Oh, for a hand to beckon !
Oh, for a voice to say,
‘ Follow in firm assurance—
This is the way ! ’ ”

Well ! we may have it, if we have faith. But what is faith ?

“ Now faith is the *substance* of things hoped for, the *evidence* of things not seen.”

“ Faith that the Lord never gives, without in some way, ere long, putting it to the test.”

Why? Is it to lead us to pray, “ Lord, increase our faith ” ?

VI.

JUST one peep into Elizabeth's sitting-room told the story of her father's almost womanly care for her better than words can, for every detail that surrounded her there whispered of it.

It was not a large room, and we have already described the eastern window, with its broad seat that filled nearly one side.

Dainty curtains of snowy muslin were looped back from the casement, with wide, blue ribbons, that Mrs. Blinn used playfully to call, "a bit of Lisbeth's extravagance."

And the sunshine had a loving trick in summer, and in winter, of creeping in through that window, and playing like a caress or smile about Lisbeth's low chair, her favourite books, little work-basket, and dearest of all her treasures, the lily-shaped vase of crystal glass, that filled with fresh flowers always stood on

the centre table. To be sure, sometimes, they were nothing more than a handful of violets, field daisies, golden-rod and purple asters, as the season might be; but always fresh, for Lisbeth had an instinctive dread of faded buds and blossoms.

On the morning of her eighteenth birthday, as she entered the room, she found Mrs. Blinn had been there before her, for the vase held a cluster of June roses. The pinkest roses of all the summer,—there were white nun-like sister buds too, so sharp in contrast to the rosy blushing ones, that Lisbeth rested her finger on them for a moment, while a shadow flitted across her face as she murmured,

“Are they types of sorrowful days that must come in my year? I want it to be all joy!”

And hastily she pulled one of the deepest-dyed roses of them all from the cluster, and fastened it in her golden-brown hair.

Then, as was a way of hers, she fell into wondering why roses were ever white,—roses, the flowers that always seemed dropped out of sunrise and sunset glory clouds.

She wondered, too, if the old legend were true that white flowers were freighted with the sweetest perfumes, like pure, stainless hearts, with spiritual graces.

But Lisbeth's musings were speedily interrupted, for she heard a voice calling :

"Lisbeth, Lisbeth !"

It was Mrs. Blinn ; and hardly had the echo of that call died away, before, in a tone clear as a bird-song, Lisbeth answered :

"I am coming."

A minute later she came,—came as she had done a hundred times before at Mrs. Blinn's call, gaily, unconsciously, with never a thought that the day held her future as the bud holds the flower.

This unconsciousness of what days will bring, when days begin, is such a tender providence, for there come to us all, days, when, even though the sky be cloudless, sunrise would be clouded, if we were to know the weaving of the thread of our life that is going on, in what we call "the commonplace passage of the hours."

Lisbeth tarried but a minute with Mrs. Blinn,

only long enough to answer her birthday greeting, and to playfully say :

"No, no ; I will not have you tell me, because I am eighteen to-day, to put away and have done with childish things, for I do love the child-time that must end, I suppose, for years are so arbitrary they will go on counting up and up, no matter how much one longs to stay their progress."

And with a light caress, laughingly she turned away, and sought the flower-bordered garden walk, gathering as she went, now one blossom and then another, till the light basket she carried grew almost heavy with its wealth of blooms.

Then she wandered on down to the cliff.— It was high tide, and sitting on the projecting rock, she could look straight down into the water that was so blue and calm that morning.

Of all summer hours there are none more lovely than those that hold the benediction of day-dawn, and the beauty surrounding her made life a pure delight to the young girl.

As she retraced her steps homeward, the

early sunbeams falling on the dew-kissed flowers, seemed to draw forth all the fragrance they had garnered during the night, and the air was laden with perfume, something as a soul is sweet with peace, after the dews of refreshment that fall in the darkness of sorrow are smiled upon by the sunbeams of Heavenly Love.

But Lisbeth was then unlearned in the tender metaphors Nature hints to souls that read her parables. Yet, before nightfall, she remembered the morning as something very far off, so much the day held for her, and as she remembered, she thought of the flowers starred with dew-drops, and of how the dew had not fallen till darkness and shadows of night had shrouded flower and leaf; but she did not find comfort in the thought, she was ignorant of the significance of the Bible promise: "I will love them freely, I will be as the dew unto Israel;"—a stranger to the meaning of those words of old Luther's—"I had not known what a lovely thing the dew is, unless the Holy Scriptures had commended it, when

God says, 'I will give thee of the dew of Heaven,'—Ah, the creation is a beautiful thing, when we ought to be understanding it, we lisp and stammer, and say *clodo*, for *credo*; like the babes, we never can understand, save through the Son." This is the sum of his discourse: "Per me—per me—per me."

It is so wonderful; the much of comfort a tiny dew-drop holds if he smiles on it.

The second call Lisbeth heard that birthday morning was her father's, and swift as a bird she obeyed that summons.

Dr. Endicott was standing in the open doorway, over which climbed, in sweet confusion, honeysuckle, eglantine, and clematis.

Lisbeth did not at first notice that her father was not alone,—she was so eager to show him the flowers, and half concealed and half opened buds, her moss-linked basket held,—when she did notice, it was only to petulantly wish the stranger away; for in her heart was thrilling a question she longed to ask.

A question, "born out of the sounds and sights of nature," that coming in through

eye and ear to the soul, had hinted and foreshadowed a something more in life than she had yet known.

And yet, that morning of all mornings, she had only time for a loving word from her father, who, almost straightway after introducing her to the stranger, Mr. Alexander Gordon, resumed the conversation her coming had interrupted; and then the breakfast bell rang; and then the day and the day's occupations thronged in.

VII.

THAT breakfast was an uncomfortable meal to Lisbeth, or rather, for the first time in her life, she had a feeling of self-consciousness as she presided at the table.

"I cannot tell why," she said afterward, when talking to Mrs. Blinn, "but Mr. Gordon makes me feel something as I fancy a wise old owl must make poor little wingsters of the feathered tribe feel,—something as though, like the birds, I knew nothing but a song, while he, wise owl, knows every habit and haunt of cross-bill, and wren, robin, and blue jay;—all the time during breakfast," she added with a gay laugh, "I felt like singing out,—yes, I know, I am nothing but a child—I know

" ' I watch the light and shade in ceaseless play,
And wrap about me many a golden dream ; ' "

I know—


“ ‘ I have no haunting memories of grief,
No care for living, more than have the flowers
Who wear the perfect blossom and the leaf,
With little thought of common time or hours.’ ”

And then when I said anything he looked so much amused. I almost thought he would laugh outright when papa, who knows how dearly I love sunrise, asked, ‘ Well, my daughter, what of the morning ? ’—and I repeated for answer Mrs. Browning’s lines beginning,

“ ‘ Two pale thin clouds did stand upon
The meeting line of sea and sky.’ ”

I wonder if it is childish to repeat poetry :—
Looking up from the flowers she was arranging, Lisbeth found herself alone ; for the busy housekeeper had gone. But she did not much mind, for her thoughts were quite absorbed with this Mr. Gordon, and she continued to muse aloud, saying—

“ His smile is so unlike my father’s, it seems nothing more than a thing of politeness, or amusement when he observes me,—not at all



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“ His smile is so unlike my father’s, it seems nothing more than a thing of politeness, or amusement when he observes me,—not at all

as though it came from his heart, as my father's smiles do. I wonder if out in the world, in the 'society' that Mrs. Grant talks of my becoming familiar with, there is just as much difference in the way people smile, as there is between a ripple on the ocean and a real stirring wave.—The one, merely on the surface, and the other coming up as it were from the ocean's heart.—What a wonderful place that heart must be, and yet we who sail on the ocean know no more about it than an inland traveller, who stands upon the beach, and because he sees the broad expanse, thinks he knows its wonders, while all the time he is a stranger to the dashing foam-crested waves, the wonderful light and shade, the varrying colour, now blue as the sky, now green as meadow grass, now warm with rosy glow, and then cold and angry. The ocean's heart ! how mny treasures it holds."

Just here Lisbeth's musings were interrupted by the sound of slow monotonous steps, passing to and fro on the gravel walk.

Peeping through the half-drawn blind she

saw it was Mr. Gordon and her father; and a minute later her father's chaise was driven up to the door, and Doctor Endicott entered the house before starting on his morning round of visits.

He only lingered long enough to bid Lisbeth good-bye, and to tell her of his regret that she could not be his companion on that morning, and to say, with a smile tenderer even, it seemed to her as she afterward recalled it, than his always tender smiles—

“You will find your birthday gift, my Lilybell, waiting for you in your room, and to-night we will talk of its contents.”

(But so seldom we talk at nightfall of what we plan in the morning—so seldom.)

And then Doctor Endicott hastened away.

For a minute or two after his departure Lisbeth stood with downcast eyes and flushed face. She was too much disappointed at the loss of her anticipated morning talk to rally at once, and with impatience she pushed aside the few flowers remaining to be arranged, saying in a tone of vexation—

"I wish this Mr. Gordon had never come, and if he had to, why must he needs choose this of all days?"

Then her mood changed, and laughing merrily at her own impatience, she danced across the broad hall, and up the wide staircase, eager to see her birthday gift.

On opening the door of her room, she straightway beheld it. An antique cabinet of curious device, heavily ornamented with ormolu, and inlaid with birds and flowers wrought in mother-of-pearl, intermingled with a broad tracery of vine-leaves, and grotesque figures in tortoise-shell.

Lisbeth at once saw that it was not a new treasure, and her heart beat quickly as she felt it must have been her mother's. Yes, truly it had been, for on a card which was suspended by a narrow ribbon from the silver key, Doctor Endicott had written, "For my daughter Elizabeth, on her eighteenth birthday—memories of her mother."

For long after reading those words there was silence in the room. Lisbeth was a girl

er father; and
he was driven
silent entered
his morning

to bid Libeth
regret that she
that morning,
never even, it
recalled it, then

gift, my Lily-
and to-night

(think of what
you.)

stood away.

his departure
eyes and flushed
pointed at the
talk to rally at
turned while the
sighed, saying in

such secrets of one's self"—and thinking thus, the awe of looking within seemed to hold her spell-bound.

Full an hour went by, and still the key was unturned, the door unopened. But by and by the striking of the little clock on the mantel roused her; a sunbeam, too, had crept through the open window, and quite across the room, till it fell aslant the cabinet, lighting up the mother-of-pearl designs on wings and breasts of birds, into faint, rosy, sea-shell hues, and putting colour into every flower, while the grotesque figures and clustering vine-leaves seemed to lose the sombre tints of the tortoise-shell, and to glow with golden brightness. And then, when the sunshine was about her, Lisbeth at last found courage to turn the key.

VIII.

A KEY that Doctor Endicott had not turned since a night, not long after his young wife's death—and then, it was to shut, not to open.

As the long-closed doors flew apart at Lisbeth's trembling touch, the room was straightway pervaded with a faint sickly odour, that for a moment, though she was strong and well, made her dizzy.

It came from a box of carved sandal-wood which had kept its intense perfume, while the sweetness of a bunch of faded roses in a tiny drawer below, had all gone long ago. And yet, the roses had been so much dearer a memento than the carved wood! Why did their fragrance go first? Another life problem, another unanswered question, to meet Lisbeth on that morning.

The looking over these treasures was a
D

strange, exciting task, seeming in a certain way to give a serious significance, a foreshadowing of what was coming, to her playful words to Mrs. Blinn that she did not want the child-time to end that day, for all suddenly, as she gazed on what had been her mother's, life became more real to Elizabeth Endicott.

She was so brought with all her own future before her into the very presence of another's past.

A past hidden from her, as mist sometimes of a summer morning veiled the cliff, and yet a mist that could not shut away the echo of the voices of the fishermen out in the Bay, just as the silence of those mute things could not still a mystic voice from the life which had held them dear, an echo, from the unknown shore, of her mother's youth.

“Have we not too? yes, we have
Answers and we know not whence;
Echoes from beyond the grave,
Recognised intelligence.”

The cabinet did not hold much of great

value, but every trinket and souvenir seemed freighted and inwrought with what had meant much to her young mother.

"Only a girl like I am now," Lisbeth softly repeated, and her heart was full of an eager longing to touch the mute things into speech, to grasp something of her mother's past with a more tangible hold than an echo.

"If I only had," she murmured, "one of my father's real heart-memories, I would not ask for more,—one of those heart-pictures, that papa says are painted in brighter colours than even with all my love of colour I can dream; but to me it is all so vague,—her child, and yet with no memory of a mother's smile or caress."

Presently Lisbeth brushed the tears from her eyes, though they did not go from her heart, and then she opened one drawer after another, looking tenderly at their contents,—touching little mementoes of a pure innocent young life. The jewels that had been her husband's wedding gift lay in the rich case that held them, just as Nanette's hands had

left them on their satin cushion, that was white as snow then, but now yellow with time. And, spite the contrast with the intrinsic value of the jewels, there lay a bunch of faded violets close beside the sparkling gems. Shadowy spirit-like flowers, that once had been of deepest blue. It was much the same story with everything Lisbeth found. A linking of the hidden sweetness of love that tells its story oftener in flowers than in jewels, for by the side of well-nigh every gem there was some simple souvenir, that seemed to whisper, "I tell only of love,—only of love." But, it was a book, heavily bound in Russia leather, and opening by a silver clasp, that hinted to Lisbeth more of her mother than aught else.

It was half a sketch-book and half a journal. It dated from a few months before her mother's marriage, and on to only a week before her death. An enigma book it seemed at first sight, but it speedily became full of meaning with its pages traced by stray lines from favourite author, or poet's song; and marked by pressed flowers and ferns, as though the

bright-coloured and green things had been used as memory-marks for days and joys, as one uses dates.

There were pages too, where were outlined sketches of mountain and sea views; and studies of trees, rugged oaks, graceful elms, and spire-like cedars; and of rocks, some bold and jagged, others overgrown with mosses, clumps of ferns, patches of blue-bells, or upright tufts of columbine.

Like guide-posts they seem to Lisbeth, pointing to broad glimpses into her mother's heart,—the child-wife, who had been so dear to Doctor Endicott, because a child in that *child-likeness* of which Christ said, "Become as little children."

This was especially revealed by brief sentences, scattered here and there, and though Lisbeth was too ignorant in spiritual experiences to fully grasp their meaning, many of them she found voice-full.

Long she pondered over the words, "Keep your heart pure, that it may never be a stranger to prayer."

It was a new thought to her, that only a holy heart can abide always under the brooding wings of nearness to God.

A nearness that is something different from the commonly realised care of the Heavenly Father which we call Providence; a closer nearness that lifts the heart where prayer abides up to the Heavenly Love, and so is typified by a child's heart; for who clings so close to a father's hand as a child?

The written words in the book were dearer even than the graceful traceries of pencil and brush, just as the simple souvenirs were dearer than the gems.

But dearest of all the treasures Lisbeth found in the old cabinet, was a bit of half-finished work, a dainty garment for a baby form,—she knew it had been meant for herself,—a simple thing, but full of tender hints of mother-love to the motherless girl.

When at last Lisbeth gathered up the treasures, and, with touch loving as a caress, laid them away, one by one, she could not lose the sense that she had actually been into the

Past. She looked around the room with a feeling that her mother must be near her in visible presence. She stretched out her hand as though to clasp that long-ago dead mother's hand. But there was no answering touch, no visible presence in the room, only the common daylight, the familiar furniture, and the nodding June roses on the centre-table.

And then a smile lit up for a moment Lisbeth's face ; for, though she was far from any real heart-knowledge of Divine things, she had been so carefully taught by her father, she recognised the comforting significance of many Bible passages, and wanting her mother as she did, her thoughts turned to the angels, and she wondered if some good man like Elisha of old were to pray for her as he prayed for the young man, "Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, and the Lord opened his eyes, and he saw the mountain was full of horses and chariots," would her eyes be opened, too, to behold her mother ? for surely, Lisbeth said to herself, "the meaning of that God-given sight

to the young man is, that about us all are ministering spirits—the angels, if our eyes were but open to see them.”

Many other thoughts, much of the same kind, thronged into her heart that morning of her eighteenth birthday, and thus her mother's earth-life that ended so long before, took hold as it were of her child's life.

Is it always so, that when God calls to Himself the pure in heart, He lets fall from their example and lives, seeds of sweet influence and holy aspirations, that upspring and blossom in other hearts and lives ?

It is pleasant to think so, sweet to believe, that most exquisite of all flowers in shape and hue, the Rose of Sharon, is a type of human life. The legend runs : “ Its blossoms are bell-shaped, and of many mingled hues and dyes ; and in the land of the far East it is adopted as the emblem of the Resurrection, and regarded with profoundest reverence for the sake of the life-parable it holds, for when the season of flowering is over, the leaves that encircle the round blossoms dry and close together, and

the stalk withering completely away, the flower is blown at last from the stem on which it grew, and having dried in the form of a ball, is carried by the breeze to great distances, borne over wastes and sandy deserts, till at last it touches some moist place, where immediately it takes root and springs to fresh life and beauty again."

Yes, we repeat, it is sweet to believe, like the flowers, saintly lives and examples upspring and live again in other lives and hearts, though, perchance, the years in which they seem dead are as many as the wastes and sandy desert miles of that far-off country.

IX.

LISBETH had been so utterly absorbed in the contents of the cabinet, she had taken no note of passing time. She had paid no heed either to the unwonted sounds in the house ; she had not even heard the tread of heavy footfalls coming slowly up the stairway, neither had she noticed the murmur of suppressed voices, and the frequent passing to and fro in the hall of hasty footsteps.

She was no more prepared for the coming of sorrow than a flower that blooms on a sunny hillside is prepared for crushing storm. The first great grief of her life was sudden to her, as a lightning-flash !

"How shall we tell her?" again and again Mrs. Blinn had asked. But no one answered. And thus minutes sped on, to full two hours, after Doctor Endicott's silent form was carried into the home from which he had gone forth,

apparently in the vigour of his manhood, only a brief time before,—the home in which his last utterance had been loving words to his child. Minutes sped to hours, and Lisbeth knew nothing of it all.

But at last she opened her door ; and then, only a second divided the tranquil peace in her heart from the wild anguish that straightway filled it.

She came forth more quietly than was her usual way, for though she was singing, it was a low, wistful song like a refrain of her thoughts.

A song that was silenced in a moment, for on the threshold she met Mrs. Blinn who had been waiting patiently for her coming, and struggling for courage to say the words that must be said ; but who, when at last she came, only folded her in her arms with a cry of grief.

Perhaps it was better so,—perhaps the language of tears told more gently than words of the sorrow that awaited Lisbeth.

It was Mr. Gordon, almost a stranger, who later told all there was to tell,—so little,

—just the heart-breaking truth, that Doctor Endicott, only an hour after parting from her, had been stricken with sudden illness; so sudden,—one moan of pain, one feeble effort to speak, and then the beating heart for ever stilled; “the silver cord loosened; the golden bowl of life broken, and the spirit with God who gave it.”

Words cannot picture the anguish of that day to Elizabeth Endicott; yet she was outwardly calm; she uttered no word; she shed no tear; she only shook her head as they tried to lead her away from the room.

She was as one deaf to the consolations with which Mr. Grant, her pastor from babyhood, strove to comfort her.

Only as she held her father's hand,—never cold to her clasp before,—only as she gazed on his face that had ever till then been responsive to her least appeal, did a look come into her eyes, as though she held communion with him still.

A far-away look of eager yearning, a something that seemed to tell that her great love

gave her insight into the silence that surrounded him. A look, as though for a moment love opened the way into an understanding of the mystery of it all. Did it? Can it?

All day she sat by his side, sat there till the sun set; till the light faded from the sky, and twilight shadows stole in through the open window, while darkness deepened over sea and land.

They brought candles into the room at last,—candles, the flames of which flickered and shone like stars in the gloom,—for the night had come.

“If she would only speak; if she would only shed a tear;” Mrs Blinn repeated in sob-broken tones.

But Lisbeth shed no tear, uttered no word, and the night wore on to day.

X.

TO Lisbeth the days that closely followed that night of watching by her father's side were ever afterward as a blank.

When she strove to recall them, memory seemed dulled ; she was like one asleep, except at rare intervals, when she gave way to uncontrollable grief, which vented itself in passionate weeping, that left her weak and tired like a feeble child.

After these times, she clung to Mrs. Blinn with such an unspoken helpless sorrow in her eyes, it well-nigh broke the good woman's heart.

" My poor little lady-bird, who has forgotten how to sing," she would softly say, as she smoothed the hair back from Lisbeth's aching brow, or rubbed her cold trembling hands.

" Poor little Lily-bell, that is broken from its stem, my crushed flower ! "

And truly Lisbeth's heart was like a flower that, in the midst of midsummer's warmth and gladness, is suddenly bent low and withered by a blighting frost ; for during those times of reserve she almost resented the comfort with which friends tried to console her ; during them she even turned coldly away from Mrs. Blinn, while her very nature seemed changed. And it was changed in a certain way,—for the day when they carried her father to his grave, her aforetime unquestioning belief in God's goodness and love seemed suddenly to vanish, and thus, poor child, she was like a drifting boat on stormy water, with anchor gone, and no helmsman to guide to land.

For when she had once opened her heart to let in a doubt of God's goodness, other questions and doubts before unknown had come rushing in too, and foremost among them, the great unanswerable *why* of trouble.

The question that bars heart-doors against the entrance of God's love as no other question does. The *why*, that only is hushed by Faith's answer,—“ He knows.”

Youth is a time of questions, and Lisbeth had felt them stirring before the trouble came. On the morning of her birthday, though she was in the full gladness of joy, she had looked up to the sky and out to the sea with a newly-awakened wonder and questioning in her heart, where thoughts thronged, that had been intensified by the glimpses into her mother's life, revealed through the cabinet-held treasures, and then, by the hours of watching by her father's motionless form.

If she could have gone to him with her perplexities, her ignorance, and her longings, it seemed to her they would have vanished as mist before the sunrise.

But without her father to tell her what it all meant, she was a child lost in the fog, who hears notes of a lighthouse bell, warning that rocks are near, perilous sands, and dangerous reefs, and yet catches through the gloom not even a glimmer from the swinging lamp in the tower.

There was nothing strange in her state of mind, though it sorely puzzled Mrs. Blinn, to

whom it would have been easy of explanation, had she known a little more of human nature, and the subtle working of intense grief on a heart that for the first time feels its touch.

For when the deepest emotions of a young soul are stirred, from whatever cause, there is wont to be a longing for knowledge; a yearning to understand the mystery of life and death, a "reaching out after the Infinite," even though it be almost unconsciously.

And till that birthday morning, Lisbeth's heart had been as unruffled by touch of trouble or perplexing thought as a deep stilly pool; thus she was as unprepared to comprehend why sorrow and discipline were needed as she was powerless to explain the mystery of the over-arching sky, or the wonders of the wide ocean. And when suddenly she was brought face to face with trouble, when for the first time she recognised the great pulsing sob-note of pain as a more universal cry than joy; when for the first time she longed, and longed in vain, for the voice of her father's love and help; for the first time learned the meaning of the word

loneliness, there came a sense of bitterness into her heart.

The rebellion of a hurt child against the Lord who had let sorrow come to her, who let sorrow come to hundreds of hearts with every passing hour all the broad world over.

She had lived all her life before in the sunshine. How could she find her way in the dark?

There were those who told her, but she would not heed their words, she turned from them impatiently.

"What made her so calm?" asked more than one who had watched her during the day and night following her father's death.

"What gave the look to her face then, as though she were going with him part way up

" ' The silvery shining stair,
That leads to God ' ? "

Was it only because of her clinging clasp of her earthly father's hand, her love for him, and not from any sense of the nearness of the Heavenly Father?

Was this why she was left afterward, comfortless, why there thrilled in her heart a wild restless pain, a longing to know the *why* of it, and yet a rebellious cry against the only One who can make the *why* of grief and suffering plain?

It was a pitiful thing, that in those first days of her grief Lisbeth thus lost the privileges of her sorrow ; for sorrow has privileges that joy misses !

Think,—“if all the loneliness of sorrow fulfilled its purposes, how glorious life would be. If we were all faithful to that darkness which so dwarfs the ordinary interests of this world, how affliction would be the greatest blessing ; how, in exchange for one friend on earth, we should get the vision of eternity ; the splendour of Divine light ; a hope sanctified by tears ; the assurance of the infinite Presence ; the sweet hope in that Providence which fits the discipline of eternity to the heart’s deepest need.”

All this Lisbeth lost, for a weary long time, —lost, by admitting doubts into her heart ; for though the teachings of her father, the influence

of her mother were there too, they were veiled from her by mists of her own making, her own admitting; mists, alas, heavier than the sea fogs which sometimes hid from sight the cliff and the shore.

Not but that she rose in a certain way above her grief,—or sank below it.

Youth was strong within her, her self-hood a decidedly marked individuality; she was by nature a bright, light-hearted, joyous creature; and she found rosy joys dawning, flowers springing up in her pathway, even though she never again could gather roses without knowing there were thorns on their stems!

It was leaving every association of home, and the dear familiar places and scenes that whispered of her father, that seemed to work this partial healing of Lisbeth's sorrowing heart; yet, while she glided on the apparently smooth waters of the new life that opened before her, she often wished when she had time to think, as many a mourner has wished before, that she had stayed bravely in the place where the sorrow fell; stayed and met, and perchance

conquered the great loneliness, the aching of her heart, by taking up and doing the simple duties that lay about her; by rendering kindly ministries to the fisher-folk, and the many little "love-services" that are open to all who seek them.

For though her sorrow seemed overlaid by the new scenes and pleasures that surrounded her, she did not really forget it, any more than she forgot the earnest life-problems pleading for answers. The questions which always found utterance when she was with those whose companionship stirred the deeper, better part of her nature. The questions that, like her grief, naught could really silence and soothe, save the Voice of Him, the Christ, who alone can say to sin, doubt, or sorrow-tossed hearts, "Peace, be still."

During all that time (for we have anticipated months, to which we must return if we would follow Lisbeth's story step by step of the way) in her heart life's pattern was being wrought in a wonderful tracery of mingled light and shade; a delicate etching, like the light and

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shadow poems, that the frost-king so skilfully traces in pictures made of chilly mist, and fog touched by the breath of the north wind.

Could it be the doubts and sorrows of Lisbeth's life would become fair pictures too? In the mist now, would she come out into the sunshine at last?

Flowers were wrought in that life-pattern too, sweet fragrant blossoms, wooed by the kiss of the south wind as truly as the frost pictures were by the north.—For never yet was there a season, or a life, in which winds did not blow, now southward, now northward.—Do the shadowy pictures of frost and cold, or the blossoms wooed by warmth and light, show the most of life and strength, true life and spiritual strength?

We cannot tell, but God knows; and "He sendeth forth His commandment, He causeth His wind to blow

XI.

WHEN a few weeks after Doctor Endicott's death, Mr. Andrew Endicott had said: "Will you return home with me, Lisbeth, and spend the rest of the summer and early autumn with your aunt and cousins at Endicott Manor?"—she had passively consented. In truth, she was too indifferent then to care much what she did or where she went, and though she saw Mrs. Blinn making ready for her departure, she felt no interest in it, and was but little consulted about the necessary arrangements, which were completed by the end of the month.

Doctor Endicott had left a large property. The Endicotts were in all branches a wealthy family. Lisbeth was an heiress without really knowing the full meaning of the word. Only a short time before her father's sudden death, his already ample means had been increased

by the coming into his possession of a large estate that fell to him, and then to Lisbeth, as legal heirs to a distant cousin..

It was law business connected with this property that had brought Mr. Gordon to G—, and which necessitated his remaining after the Doctor's death. And being there, and a friend of his own, Mr. Andrew Endicott quite naturally placed in his care the settlement of Doctor Endicott's estate. Thus, for the few weeks that intervened after the coming of sorrow to Lisbeth and her home-leaving, she every day met Mr. Gordon, though sometimes it was only to exchange a brief greeting, and the few words her position as "lady of the house" demanded.

And though he had so engrossed her thoughts for the hour following her first meeting with him, in her present state of mind she paid no heed to him, beyond an undefined sense of comfort that there was another step beside her uncle's to be heard in the house, which seemed so cheerless, so desolate to her, missing the dear presence that had made it home.

She felt, too, an unrecognised, but real gratitude, that there was some one to talk to her uncle during the long twilights of the late June and the early July days; some one to break the stillness of the daily routine of breakfast, dinner, and tea, that had to be gone through with, and at which Lisbeth insisted on presiding; for it never occurred to her to let her sorrow be an excuse for relinquishing this hard duty that used to be such a pleasure.

And yet she never took her seat at the table and faced her father's vacant place without a sudden chill about her heart, an almost faintness, followed by a thrill of pain,—worse than any physical pain.

But, while Lisbeth was thus indifferent to Alexander Gordon, every passing day his interest in her was deepening. Somehow the first sight of her had strangely stirred his heart, which, in the security of his more than thirty years, he thought impervious to the charm of a maiden, however fair.

This interest, which might under ordinary circumstances have proved a mere passing

emotion, had been strengthened by the peculiar character of their intercourse,—the fact that he, a stranger, should have been the one to tell the girl of her father's death moved him strongly; and that afterward, with no foreplanning design of his own, he should be with her during the days which immediately followed her grief. When, though she was so unlike her former bright self, she was still lovely as she dreamily moved about with a look of plaintive sorrow on her fair face,—sorrow that asked no sympathy, and yet by the not asking, won it all the more.

He did not say to himself that he was learning to love her, perhaps at first he hardly knew it. But he did know that he never looked at her without feeling a wish in his heart that he were a better man, without remembering certain chapters in his past, and wishing he could blot them out. Why? just because he would fain, as is ever the way with true love, have had his own heart pure as the heart of this guileless girl; for love always seeks to become what it thinks the loved one is.

In his thoughts of Lisbeth, Alexander Gor-

don endowed her with "all the sweetnesses she had, and all he thought she had." And though, we repeat, he did not say even to himself that he loved her, love yet found entrance into his heart at a thousand points which he did not suspect.

It even went beyond its own purpose, till Lisbeth, who was so unconscious of it all, came to fill his thoughts like the sunshine that falls with no cloud between an open meadow or broad plain.

And, as she became to him all this, he grew more noble, though he had always been a true, noble-hearted man, the little outer manner of society's superficial touch that Lisbeth had recognised in the smile, which she had called a thing of the surface, was only an outer manner, not in truth a reflex of his real self. Still, there was room for him to grow more earnest in thought and deed,—and he did,—striving to become what he felt would be her ideal.

He knew she did not care for him, but he was content ; he was not young, he had learned

something of patience, and there was no one to rival him,—and that is such a secret of a man's content,—and he felt the present season of sorrow was no time to press upon her aught more of his society, than the tacit expression of his sympathy and constant solicitude for her comfort involved.

Then, too, he had not said to himself, "I love her."

It was a new experience to Alexander Gordon. An experience that made those four weeks that were so full of grief and bitterness to Lisbeth, sweet and beautiful to him, even though he did not ask himself why, till the evening preceding her departure.

She had been down below the Cliff, to bid good-bye to a little fisher lad, whose life, like the tide at the hour of her farewell, was running out fast toward the boundless sea,—a little life soon to sail away. Where? This question was in Lisbeth's heart when returning she met Mr. Gordon coming to meet her; and for the time,—forgetting her own trouble in her sympathy for the sick lad and his sorrowing

mother,—she was like her former self again as she looked up in her old confiding, impulsive way, saying—

“Will you make it all plain for me?”

There was so much of a child's trust in Lisbeth's nature, it took so long, such a weary deal of teaching before she learned that there are so many questions, so much in life no one can make plain for another.

Mr. Gordon knew what she meant, for he had known her errand; he knew, too, something of the darkness of doubt, even in her father's God, that had shrouded Lisbeth's life for the past weeks, and yet he asked her—

“Make what plain?”

It was so sweet to him to hearken to the words of this girl,

“Whose soul had risen as a flower
Skyward in sunny hours;”

but who, at the touch of sorrow, had folded the leaves of her heart close as flower-leaves fold at sundown.

A faint hint, nothing more than a hint, of a

smile flitted for a moment across Lisbeth's face as she replied—

“Tell me why my plants grow so much faster, yield so much richer harvest of blossoms the more I gather their flowers, just as the vines and trees bear so much fairer fruit when their branches are pruned and cut away.”

And without waiting for an answer, after her old fashion of dropping one thought to take up another, she added—

“Do you think it hurts the little flowers to be broken from the plant, to be carried into close rooms, away from the sunshine and summer breezes? You know the poet, the man who put his finger on nature's heart, sang—

“ ‘Tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air,
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there ;’

and surely, if they can feel pleasure, they must feel pain too.”

And then Lisbeth murmured, half as though speaking to herself—

“I wonder do hearts, like the flowers, grow sweeter and fuller of beauty the more they are hurt, or disciplined, as Mrs. Blinn would say;” and again she lifted her eyes, full of eager questioning, up to Mr. Gordon, repeating, “Tell me, is this why there is so much trouble in the world?”

But it was not Alexander Gordon who replied, but Mr. Grant, the village pastor, who unobserved had joined them. His answer was the quoted words—

“Even the branch that bears fruit is pruned by the great Vine-dresser that it may bring forth more fruit.—Suffering is necessary to make Jesus of use to us, just as Jesus is necessary to make suffering of use.”

And then they reached the garden-gate, where Mr. Andrew Endicott was awaiting their coming, and quietly as the moonbeams fell on the flower borders, Lisbeth slipped away, yet not so quietly but that Mr. Gordon knew that she had gone.

rolled on and above the horizon in clouds that hid the sky, and stretched before the sun, it always told of a coming storm; but it had never ceased to be a mystery to her that a bright morning should ever mean a stormy day. Does it ever cease to be a mystery to any of us?

The sea waves looked gray and sad as though they knew what was coming; only one white sail broke the wide expanse of water, and that a far-off sail. The cottages of the fishermen were still in shadow, their boats moored, their nets spread out on the low-lying shore.

"Westward, all so calm, and still, and bright. Eastward, everything gray and shadowed, waiting for the touch of sunshine to flash them into life," Lisbeth said; "it is like myself, in the East still—but in the shadow—waiting for the sun to shine, and it will not to-day."

Did she realise the deep significance of her words? No, not any more than she understood why the western hills caught the sunlight back of the clouds, while the eastern horizon,

from behind which the sun had just risen, was mist-enveloped.

There was no bitterness in her tone as she spoke; she thought herself alone, and yet she was not startled when she felt a hand laid gently on her bowed head. She was sitting on the cliff with her elbows resting on her knees, and her face on her hands, looking out upon the sea.

It was Mr. Grant who had joined her; there had been sore trouble during the night in the fisherman's home, where Lisbeth had bade farewell to the little lad, and the minister was returning from an errand of mercy and consolation.

He longed to speak some word of comfort and counsel to Lisbeth before she went away, and yet what word of his could equal the soothing whisper of that early hour of the day.

Still, he sat down by her, and knowing Lisbeth as he had done all his life, he talked to her, not as though he were formally warning and preparing her for the new scenes and un-

known home and relatives to whom she was going, but as though he were speaking with her, half in parable, and half not, as had been his wont from her childhood.

“Did you ever think,” he asked, “why the ships on the broad open sea need no pilot?”

And Lisbeth shook her head in reply as the old pastor, for he was an old man, he had known seventy winters and more of life, continued:

“Mind, I say, no pilot, though they have a helmsman; league and league they sail thus on the wide ocean without a pilot, but they dare not venture near the shore, dare not sail on the waters even of the placid river, without him, fearing wreck from hidden rock, or strand from unseen sand-bar or reef. And, it is much the same in life, my child; we are all like the ships sailing on the ocean, learning every day that it is in ‘the small, secret every day acts of life that we most need conscience to warn us to be aware of the hidden shoals of what we deem too common to be dangerous.’”

But it was not counsel that Lisbeth wanted, even though so gently given, and scarcely seeming to heed Mr. Grant's words, she looked up at him eagerly, as she had done the evening before to Mr. Gordon, asking much the same question she had asked then ; and as then, not waiting for a reply, but letting query follow query swiftly as birds wing their way from tree top to tree top, queries, that were all enfolded in the egotism of one unlearned in sorrow, and prefaced by the *why* which is the key-note of rebellion ; all commonplace too, and yet none the less puzzling.

“Why, if God were Love, had He taken her father from her ? Why all in a minute had He sent grief in place of gladness into her life ? Why had the dark thunder-cloud of trouble broken above her, and the lightning flash of sorrow revealed, while she was still so young, that her grief was but a sigh out of the groan of sufferings and partings that were ever rending human hearts ? Why were sorrows ordained ? Suffering permitted ? Why must the touch of change and death fall on every-

thing? What of the Afterward to it all, the wide, vague, silent unknown? It was all so strange, so confusing."

As Lisbeth gave utterance to these thoughts, the old bitterness came back; she found Mr. Grant, too, as powerless to answer them as she herself, and she turned from him impatiently, when he repeated the ordinary words of comfort—

"It is the Lord's doing; bow in humble submission to His will, Lisbeth, and what you know not now, you shall know hereafter."

Even the tender words, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth," were dull and empty to her, which was not strange; for, till they are faith-illuminated, what words are harder to understand?

Almost petulantly she exclaimed:

"No, no, that is not the answer I want; I want to know the why, the meaning of it all?"

"But, child, you never can know that," the minister gently said, and he stood bewildered, as Lisbeth rose hastily, her confiding manner giving place to the cold reserve of the last few

weeks, as she extended her hand, saying, as though he were quite a stranger :

“ Good-bye, Mr. Grant ; I am going away to-day,” and scarcely waiting for his farewell she turned homeward, repeating to herself, “ Yes, going away,—going away ! ”

XIII.

IN the garden Lisbeth met Mrs. Blinn, who said, "I came to meet you, dear, and I brought you this ; your Uncle Andrew found it among your father's papers, and seeing it was of no use for business reference, he tossed it on one side ; but somehow, I thought, being in your father's own handwriting, you would like it. In the same division of the note-book was this too."

And Mrs. Blinn led Lisbeth within the shelter of a vine-covered arbour, as she handed her the worthless things that yet were so precious to the young girl.

The one, a copy of verses, the other, a tiny folded paper, yellowed with age, and worn at the edges as though from frequent opening. There was nothing in it but a lock of soft shiny brown hair,—her mother's,—Lisbeth knew. "Read the verses now if you like," said kindly

Mrs. Blinn, whose love instinctively felt they might be comforting; "but mind you come, my dear," she added, "when the breakfast-bell rings, for you will be leaving soon afterward."

And Mrs. Blinn turned hastily away, to hide her quickly-falling tears.

So Lisbeth was left alone, holding in her hand the lock of her mother's hair, and the lines copied by her father, soon after her mother's death; her first glance revealed this.

I.

"Oh weary days and nights, so still, so still,—
The useless sails hang flapping stiff and slow;
We pine and chafe, and set our helpless will
In vain revolt at what to change. To know
Is not for us. We hear the strong winds blow
And fret as in the east, the west, we see
Great ships and small go sliding fast and free

II.

"Oh fearful days and nights, so dark, so cold,—
The swift waves mock and leap on every side;
No rudder steers; no mast, no spar, can hold;
We think no ear could hear us if we cried:
We think God would not miss us if we died;
We feel forgotten, helpless, cast away;
We shut our eyes and do not even pray.

III.

"Oh peaceful days, and peaceful nights whose peace
Cannot be uttered ! Oh green shores of life
Beyond the body ! Shall we ever cease
To smile that through such hot and silly strife
We came ? That doubts and fears could grow so rife ?
That we could fail to see how God's good hand
Our anchorings and our driftings planned ?"

Simple verses, but soothing to Lisbeth, seeming in a certain way like an echo of her own heart-ache, giving utterance to her own heart's cry, all but the last.

"But perhaps some day I will come to that knowledge too," she said.

And she felt quieted, as one is quieted by low notes of far-off music.

She was so much of a child too, spite the ageing touch of sorrow that had fallen on her, that "with the instinct of a child's heart, which is sometimes truer than all logic," she straightway grasped that last verse as a sort of promise, a sweet assurance, that for her father all perplexing questions were at an end ; all was peace and gladness now.

Thus it happened that the bit of paper,

which Mr. Andrew Endicott had tossed on one side, was wafted to Lisbeth, wafted, shall we not believe, by one of the

“Angels who wait on providence,
And mark the sundered places,
To graft with gentlest influences
The heavenly graces”?

The clouds gathered so swiftly that morning, when Lisbeth left the harbour summoned by the ringing of the breakfast-bell, rain was already beginning to fall, softly, slowly, and yet the music of the pattering drops on the leaves was distinctly audible.

“It will be as I thought,” she said, “a long, long, rainy day.”

And she was glad; it seemed easier to go away when everything was clothed in a sober light; easier to have the sky dull and leaden with clouds, rather than blue and bright with sunshine; and the storm was nothing then in violence, but passive, and quiet, like her mood.

It poured steadily an hour later when the farewells were said, when Lisbeth parted from

Mrs. Blinn, and bade good-bye to the weeping servants.

A storm that by mid-day had so increased that the wind was sighing in fitful gusts through the boughs of the old ash, and tossing the sea waters into foam-crested waves, that broke against the cliff with a dreary, moan-like cadence. But only Mrs. Blinn looked out from the library window on the fury of the storm; only Mrs. Blinn heard the sighing of the wind, the moaning of the waves. Lisbeth was far away then, swiftly speeding across a broad stretch of miles.

XIV.

THAT day's journey was to Lisbeth, when she afterwards tried to recall it, as much a blank in the matter of detail as the weeks immediately preceding.

Their way led inland, and all through the day they kept on the outskirts of the storm, for though rain fell, it was quietly; there was no wildness, like that Mrs. Blinn watched from the old library window.

For an hour or two Mr. Gordon was their companion, and both he and Mr. Andrew Endicott made every effort to divert Lisbeth. But, though only a month before she would have been so eagerly interested in all about her, she was now so listless and indifferent that her uncle soon relaxed his efforts, and after Mr. Gordon left them became absorbed in a budget of papers and magazines.

Lisbeth was glad, she wanted to be quiet; she had an instinctive feeling that that day was to her like a bridge leading from one life into another; and though she was a brave-hearted girl, she trembled at the crossing; she would fain have stayed, when the time came to leave it, on the shore she knew; fain have lingered in the land that encompassed her childhood's world.

There was nothing of sickly sentimentality in her nature; but till her father's death she had been such a child of song and sunshine, she could not let go of her happy past without making for it a "little grave in her heart," a place to embalm with the odour of bygone gladness and the echo of for ever silent joys.

But it was still the spring-time of life to her, and so it was a spring-time heart-grave.

As she sat so quietly by her uncle's side, weaving her own fancies, she was ignorant as a child of the tender custom of the ancients; who buried their dead in the morning twilight, rather than at nightfall, striving to believe that Aurora had stolen them to her embrace in the

dawn; that through the heat of the day and the darkness of the night they might let fall from the blue sky flowers to the weary earth-dwellers.

Ignorant as a child of this custom; and yet in converse with her heart she acted as though she knew it well, burying her first grief while it was still morning to her.

And, because she had been soothed by reading the verses copied by her father, which seemed to assure her that he knew all about what was so dark to her; for the time she had an unquestioning faith that out of his happiness he would let fall stray seeds of knowledge for her,—his child.

Thinking and feeling thus, the long hours of that day's journey were peaceful; she even whispered to herself:—"Perhaps I will know gladness again when I am used to it all, perhaps I will;" and something like a smile for a moment flitted across Lisbeth's face, though her eyes were dim with tears.

It was quite dark when they reached the city; the noise and confusion of the crowded

depot bewildered the country-reared girl, but they only lingered from the arrival of one train to the departure of the next.

The clouds had broken toward sunset ; and now and then broad beams of moonlight gleamed through the rifts, revealing to Lisbeth that their way lay by the shore of a broad river, edged by highlands, covered by dense forests. Often the train darted into darkness, as though seeking the very heart of the night, or the hills, and the harsh reverberation of echoing sound told her they were passing through rock-walled passages ; but before she had time to feel a fear they were out again by the riverside, where the fitful moonlight fell on the wavelets in shining gleams, like silvery shadows of fleecy clouds, that reminded her of smiles and happy thoughts playing over the faces of little children.

Once, when for thirty miles or more their way was off from the river's shore, the moor light fell on a still lake, the waters of which were half hidden by great patches of dead leaves, shining here and there with snow-wh

lily-buds, that in the moonlight looked like gleam of precious gems.

It seemed to Lisbeth as she watched the fitful changes of light and shadow, as though she were gliding through some dream-land ; or living in the pages of her best-loved books of fancy and fable ; and so, bounded by the sense of reality which was yet unreality, the hours sped on till they neared midnight.

It was quite midnight when the train slackened its speed, and Mr. Andrew Endicott exclaimed : " Home at last ! "

Lisbeth started, with a thrill half of fear and half of regret ; a minute later she was standing on the broad platform, watching the long train glide out into the darkness, and hearing a confused sound of questions and answers. And then her uncle had said, " Come, " and in another second with a sharp click the carriage door closed, and they, too, were out in the darkness once more, in a stillness unbroken now save by the rumbling of the wheels over the gravelly road ; a darkness unrelieved, for the moon had set, except as the carriage lamps

let fall a sickly gleam on bank side, tree, and bush.

An hour's drive and then a sudden turn,—a swift passing through a wide-open gate, a broad background of glowing light, framing in an open doorway, and the slender figure of a graceful lady awaiting their coming.

This was what Lisbeth saw, and all the time she had a sense of being outside of it all, as though she were watching some one else, and not herself making a part of the scene,—a sense of unreality that did not vanish at her aunt, Mrs. Endicott's, kindly greeting ; for, as Lisbeth gazed about her, everything was so aglow with warmth and brightness, it seemed coming in from the darkness and chill of midnight, like some fairy palace.

The very supper-table, laden with dainties for the tired travellers, was all a-glitter with silver and glass ; but of this, as of all beside, she was only dimly conscious, just as she was of presently being guided up a spacious stairway to a stately room,—so unlike her own room at home,—and there she was left alone at last.

Alone, to realise the strangeness of her surroundings, no longer with a dim consciousness, but with a great heartache bringing the by-gone weeks to her memory, and waking a wild yearning for her father, a longing to go back, back to Mrs. Blinn and the dear familiar life.

"But I cannot, I cannot," she sobbed aloud.

Yet, spite her tears and heartache, no sooner did her head touch the pillow than she fell asleep, not to wake till morning was well-nigh noon.

This was how Elizabeth Endicott crossed the bridge dividing her old life from her new.

XV.

LISBETH had always been surrounded with evidences of ease and luxury, but she was quite unprepared for the elegance and lavish adornment of her Uncle Andrew's summer home, which, as she afterwards found, was a mere echo of his city residence.

Brought up in a New England town, where something of the old Puritan spirit still held a controlling sway over extravagant expenditure, she had been used to homes like her own, abounding in every comfort; perfect treasure-houses in substantial, heavily-carved furniture, and quaint heirlooms of antique china and ancestral portraits; but she was a novice in the studied elegance in choice of form and colouring that meant so much to her aunt, Mrs. Endicott.

She was conscious, the morning after her arrival, of the pervading unlikeness of her

present surroundings to her past, even before she went downstairs.

An exterior, as well as interior unlikeness ; for looking from one, and then another window in her room, the whole scene was as unfamiliar to her as if she had awoke in a new world,—and verily she had !

Even the sunshine seemed different, as she thought of the farm-lands at home, where such a morning of sunlight and glow would have meant ripening of grain and fruits ; while here, its only task seemed to be to fall on all growing things in a blaze and brilliancy of brightness, that seemed to mean not work but pleasure, it was so lavish, so extravagant.

The soft green grass of the lawn was a wonder to her too, as it stretched down to a narrow brooklet, that served as a dividing line from a grove of stately trees to which a rustic bridge led.

From the other window she had a view of the garden, with its gay parterres bright with rare flowers, its sparkling fountains, and clumps of rich foliage of shrub and plant.

It was a fair scene to look upon, all glad in the sunlight, and music-full, for beside the pattering of the sprayey waterdrops, birds, whole families of them, were jubilant with songs of gladness.

Everything Lisbeth's eye rested upon was in harmony; no rude sign of wind or storm, no wild tangle of flowers in sweet confusion as in the garden at home, but all telling of careful order and finish, and yet she turned from the window with a sigh for a look at the dancing sea-waves, the rugged pines, the dark unchanging trees, and her own "whispering ash."

"No, no," she said to herself, "I never, never can love this world of wondrous beauty as I do my home by the sea."

Then a gentle tap sounded at her door, a rustling of silk, and a light footfall crossed the room, and Lisbeth turned to greet her aunt, Mrs. Endicott.

Together they descended to the breakfast room, where, though it was high noon, her cousins still lingered awaiting her coming;

Ethel, Fanny, and Lucille, the darling of the household. The two former were brilliant brunettes, elegant girls, fresh from the finish of a fashionable boarding-school; Ethel, a year older than Lisbeth, and Fanny a few months younger; as for Lucille, she was a fairy-like little creature, still young enough to be much in the nursery, and yet old enough to be an entertaining companion, with her quaint, wise, child-like speeches, a merry-hearted child, a bit wilful, but affectionate withal.

From the moment of Lisbeth's entrance, Lucille was captivated by the charms of this new cousin.

"She is not at all like you and Fanny," she whispered to Ethel, with a child's unconsciousness of implied disparagement.

And certainly, as Lisbeth stood in the open doorway, and then advanced with her swift, yet graceful motion—her tall, slender, girlish figure, robed in the clinging drapery of mourning, relieved by no ornament save a golden star that fastened the narrow band of white

that encircled her throat, she was a striking contrast to her cousins, in their airy summer costumes of lavender and white, ruffle and puff, that they were wearing out of respect to Dr. Endicott's memory,—“complimentary mourning,” they called it!

Mrs. Endicott, too, wore a garment indicating “affliction in the family,”—a mourning robe of black silk, relieved by bows and knots of gauzy purple ribbons, of shades varying from light to dark, that somehow, with an odd sense of the inappropriateness of the thought, seemed to Lisbeth like butterflies' wings, or pansy flowers, with their bright yellow leaves not gone, but only put out of sight for a while by the overlapping of the violet.

It did not take more than a moment for Lisbeth,—she had always been so quick to receive impressions,—to divine that in the matter of dress and manners, and later, she found in the choice of books and music, she would be almost as unfamiliar with her cousins' world, as she was with the outer scene of close-cut lawn instead of meadow grass, costly and

tropical flowers in place of blossoms as free as the air.

"We will call you Lisette," her cousin Ethel said, and musically sounded the name, uttered in her clear modulated tone.

Elizabeth was glad they chose that title rather than Lisbeth, or Lily-bell, her home and her father's names for her.

The days sped away rapidly, broken by pleasant talk, and gentle courteous recognition of Lisbeth's recent loss. She was much diverted, too, by the beauty of the grounds; and being entirely free from self-consciousness, she was not oppressed by any painful sense of timidity; still, she never for a moment lost the feeling that she and her cousins had read the story of life, as far as they had turned its pages, from a different book.

XVI.

DURING the summer weeks that followed, Mrs. Endicott and her daughters were unwearied in their efforts to divert Lisbeth from dwelling on her sorrow, and in a certain way they succeeded. Birds of pleasure themselves, they naturally devised every enjoyment which to them seemed fullest of song; and no entertainment that was admissible, under society's prescribed code for mourners, did they leave untried.

Most of the time Endicott Manor was thronged with a gay company of changing visitors, while every recurring Saturday brought two or more of Mr. and Mrs. Endicott's gentlemen acquaintances from the city, for a Sabbath in the country.

Among the most frequent of these guests was Mr. Gordon, and his friend, Sylvester Ingham,—two men who seemed to contradict the

truth of the old proverb : "A man is known by the company he keeps," at least if it indicates a similarity of character between companions ; for though Sylvester Ingham and Mr. Gordon had known each other from boyhood, they were as unlike as Lisbeth and her cousin Ethel.

Their first visit after Lisbeth's arrival at the Manor occurred on the following Saturday ; she did not know Mr. Gordon was expected ; and late in the day, with little Lucille for her companion, she went into the garden, where her delight over the rare unknown blossoms was unbounded. "It is so unlike my garden at home," she said, and she laughed, this girl who had wept so bitterly only so short a time before, as she thought of her nodding roses finding a place amid the royal beauties of the stately rose-garden through which they were walking. And then they wandered on, down to the brooklet, and Lisbeth told the child of her home by the sea ; a story Lucille never wearied of, and which was not ended when her nurse came to call her, for the summer twilight was already beginning to gather.

As she obeyed the summons, little Lucille exclaimed, gaily—

“You know I must go to sleep when the birdies do, if I would have a song for to-morrow.”

And as she parted from Lisbeth on the doorstep, she clasped her little arms about her fondly; thus when Lisbeth entered the drawing-room a minute later there was a smile on her lips, where still lingered the touch of the child's good-night kiss.

The light was shadowy, though the curtains were drawn wide to let in the gentle evening breeze.

Lisbeth started as she advanced, for a figure stood before the west window, sharply defined against the background of violet and rosy light that had not faded from the sky since sunset.

It was Mr. Gordon, and in a moment her hands, so warm before, were cold and trembling, the smile gone from her face, as he came forward to meet her; for, like a wave borne landward on incoming tide, the sight of him brought over her a longing for home and her father

—a longing which had been somewhat hushed the last few days,—and yet, an hour later she was talking quietly with him; she was again amused and diverted by the new scene around her.

It was all like a picture to her, as it had been on the night of her arrival—a picture, in which she little dreamed how large a part she made, for Alexander Gordon was not the only one, who for long kept in his memory a picture of Lisbeth that summer evening. Sylvester Ingham, too, never quite forgot how she looked then.

Sylvester Ingham! the dark-haired, brilliant man, who talked the evening long to Ethel, and who yet, well-nigh all the time, watched Lisbeth, who was so unconscious of his gaze. Poor child—or ignorant child—shall we call her?

XVII.

AFTER that there was scarcely a Saturday all the summer long, that the "two friends," as Ethel merrily called them, did not accept Mr. Endicott's cordial invitation to make a "weekly visit."

Lisbeth was always pleased at their coming,—more and more pleased as time went on. For while the presence of Mr. Gordon brought to her memories of the day when first they met, the day that sometimes seemed so far away, the day so short, and yet, that had held so much; it was almost a comfort to have anything come, and bring back to her heart for a brief time,—and it was only for that,—even the bitter pain of that day, for it hurt her sorely to find what she knew was the truth; that sometimes she had almost to make an effort to keep fresh in her mind the sorrow, that at first she had felt she could never lose even for a moment out of

her thoughts. It was not that the love for her father was any less, not that she forgot him, but simply that the present pleasures and diversions were doing just what Mrs. Endicott intended they should, overlaying grief and silencing sorrow, because, leaving no time for its voice to be heard. Over and over Lisbeth wondered how she could smile, how she could be amused, when only such a little while ago—such a little while!

Was she heartless? Why was she so contradictory to herself?

She had no knowledge of human nature to help her solve the mystery, no knowledge of grief and its workings in other hearts, no knowledge that sorrow is commonplace in this, that while it wounds and leaves a scar, yet, like the pains that rack our bodies and leave their marks in bowed, wasted figures and whitened hair, we somehow become used to the sight of our altered selves; we do not tremble and shut our eyes from the reflecting mirror as we did at first; just as we somehow become used to our troubles, and to carrying them in our

hearts, though we are not looking at the time as we did at first, are not conscious of their presence, and, Is well? Is it not one of the tenderest tender mercies of Him who "pitieth the father pitieth his children"?

With Elizabeth Endicott it was perfectly natural that this should be so; she was perfect health, and at the very age went to the brightest and most care-free in a girl thus, though for a time she had been with returning sunshine, like a flower sprang up again into bloom.

A bloom, more lovely even and a than the full joyousness of her past plaintive tenderness, born of sorrow hovered about her as she moved in her long garments of black, like a soft among her aunt and cousins' gay guests.

A maiden, veiled with the shadowy of something kept in reserve, something lovely even than the visible, just as the mists of a midsummer's day, by their

vealing, half concealing, add to the beauty of the scene.

If sometimes in the bygone days Mrs. Blinn had thought Lisbeth too eager in her impetuosity, almost too gay in her merry flights of fancy and song, it was not so now; for her present gaiety was never more than a gentle playfulness of mood, or look, brief like a


“Swallow's flight of song.”

There was a wondrous charm about her those days, that not only Mr. Gordon felt, but that fascinated Sylvester Ingham too, and that made them both seek her society with keen enjoyment. Fresh from the turmoil and strife of the great city, talking with Lisbeth was to them like listening to the rippling music of a brooklet, where the waters were so clear they revealed every pebble and tiny reef over which they played; or like gazing on some calm lake where only the blue sky was reflected. She had, too, such a decidedly marked individuality, she was so constantly varying in look and expression.

Alexander Gordon knew the secret of this charm was, that, in Lisbeth's heart, innocence was still the queen as in the days of her childhood.

"Innocence child-beloved, a guest from the world of the blessed."

And in his intercourse with her he revered it. Sylvester Ingham knew it too, but there was this difference between the two men, he heeded it not.

She interested him; she gave a new zest to those summer days,—“days, when a man seeks amusement,” he said to himself with a careless shrug of his shoulders,—the awakening and responding of her bright intellect to new thoughts under the subtle charm of his conversation, gratified him; and, what if as the weeks came and went he saw her fair face grow rosy with the blush of happiness, a tender light come into her eyes at his approach. What if he held her heart in his hand as though it had been a flower? Every day hundreds of flowers were lightly plucked, and  let fall as lightly.

What if, as he watched the unfolding of her heart, which was lovely, too, as the opening of a flower, he let drop into it seeds of thoughts, that full well he knew could take the fragrance out of flowers,—human flowers!

What if he did all this! he was too selfish to ask, "Was the gratification to himself worth it all?" too selfish to heed the answer, even if he heard it.

Meanwhile, Lisbeth went on from week to week leading the life her cousins led, and slowly becoming adapted to it, and to the thoughts Mr. Ingham suggested; pushing away from her the recognition that she was falling into the way of only seeking pleasure, that she was drifting all the time farther and farther away from the safe harbour of her father's teachings; drifting away, and reaching out no hand to stay her progress. Only now and then, she said to herself, "To-morrow I will find time to think." But when the morrow came, it was still, "To-morrow I will find time."

And so the days sped on, as summer days

will, and Lisbeth was changing with a change far more to be dreaded than that which had troubled kindly Mrs. Blinn.

What was she losing? What was she gaining?

XVIII.

A WEEK among the near mountain region that lay westward, beyond the opposite shores of the river, was to Lisbeth the crowning pleasure of that time devoted to pleasure-seeking. She wandered amid the haunts near the hotel with the same freedom with which she had wandered amid the rocks and cliffs overhanging the sea-beach at home. Though she had ever loved colour, and had so rare a skill in the use of brush and palette, she could not be induced to join her cousins and their friends in their sketch-book efforts to catch and hold "the colour of mountain and sky, that is as intangible as the colour of a dream."

"No," Lisbeth said; "I want to take the beauty into my heart, not to catch it on canvas, and if I did," she added, "who would my picture be for?"

Gay voices answered: "For me, for me." Alexander Gordon was the only one of the group who was silent; he alone understood Lisbeth's words; he alone divined the girl's sudden heartache of loneliness for her father.

Yet, as the momentary shadow passed from her face, Lisbeth did not turn to him; but to Sylvester Ingham, as she said with a smile, though tears were still in her eyes—

"Will you come with me up?" and she pointed to a winding path leading to the summit of a mountain peak.

A rugged path for tender feet to tread, sometimes overgrown with brambles, and shut in by a thick growth of underbrush and tangles of wild grape-vine, and knotted clusters of bittersweet. But she did not mind the roughness of the way!

The freshness of the air, the sweet, resinous odour of pine and hemlock, were electrical to her, and she uttered bright thoughts that twinkled like stars amid her graver words; though afterward, long afterward, when Sylvester Ingham remembered that morning, he

felt the graver words were perhaps the most star-like after all.

Suddenly she seemed to have lost the half timidity which had marked her manner toward him, and she talked with a freedom that was like an echo of her old talks with her father.

It was when they reached the summit of the peak that she said—

“Being up here is something like being in heaven, I think, the clouds seem all beneath us; I wonder so what is hidden behind the sea of mist,” and she pointed downward to the snowy billows of fog that stretched lightly along the mountain’s base.

And then a quick change came over her face as she leaned on her alpenstock, still looking at the mist which was changing its billowy whiteness into vapour-like, “blue-black clouds,” that floated up till they melted into the blue of the sky above, while waves of it went surging through the mountain passes, clinging to the higher cliffs and the great pines. The giant trees that had so bravely stood the wild blast of many a winter’s storm, and that

lifted their evergreen branches out from the shadows of the mist, like arms reaching up, seeking help from above.

"It is like life,—like life," softly Lisbeth whispered, only half knowing the meaning of the words.

Sylvester Ingham let her look as long as she wanted, and when at last he spoke, it was only to lead her on to speech; for man of the world though he was, it was sweet to him to hearken to her innocent thoughts, uttered in a tone so soft and musical.

"Do you ever think," he said, "of the language of these mountain peaks? it is as various as the notes of a maiden's song!"

Laughingly, Lisbeth answered—

"You mean they are roseate at sunrise; blue, far-away blue at noontime; pale and silvery in the moonshine. What are they at night, Mr. Ingham, when it is dark, all dark, what is their language then; I think I know their morning, noontime, and moonlight whispers; but what do they say in the dark night, interpret for me:

“‘The silence that is in the starry sky then,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills’?”

And softly, as though speaking to herself, and not to him, she continued—

“When night falls among the mountains, it gives me such a sense of rest and peace; it comforts me, seeming like the soothing, caressing touch of my father’s hand.”

Words, that had she addressed them to Sylvester Ingham, he could not have answered.

A soothing touch, and it was from her Heavenly Father’s hand, but Lisbeth only thought of the earthly father gone from her, gone into heaven.

For a second, not longer than it took for a bird to fly across their path, did the far-away look that had come with the words, linger on her face, and then again she was talking gaily.

“I have had such a beautiful, beautiful time,” she said, two hours later, as she fastened a shining cluster of mountain ash berries in her cousin Ethel’s dark hair, and she did not see the quick flush that overspread Ethel’s face at the words; she did not hear the

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impatient tap of her foot on the carpet of moss, neither did she notice the quick look of pain that for a moment flashed across Mr. Gordon's countenance.

It was that night, lying wide awake, listening to the wind in the pines, that sounded so like the sea-waves, that Lisbeth heard a new whisper in her heart—that night, that softly she murmured: “What is it?”

XIX.

LISBETH had lived the eighteen years of her life, as untouched by love of one kind as a wild-wood flower that buds and blossoms in some sheltered nook, far away from the gaze of passers, and though she asked herself, "What is it?" she did not know what touch had fallen on her till the very last of their mountain days. She only knew she was very happy; only knew all the beauty that surrounded her seemed dearer and fuller than before.

If now and then she wished Ethel would not turn from her with a hasty, impatient word, or that Mr. Gordon did not look so gravely, so almost sternly at her, she straightway forgot them, when with Sylvester Ingham for companion she wandered here and there seeking ferns and flowers, or some farther-reaching outlook than any yet discovered.

Mr. Ingham said no word of love to her; he was not a young man to be hasty; he was well-nigh full as old as Mr. Gordon, and Lisbeth remembered Mrs. Blinn had said, he was "thirty, not a day younger."

But, without a word, she went on living in her glad dream, the beautiful vague dream of a happiness undefined, went on building castles in the air, as wondrous and as fair as the pictures of cloud-land, but as intangible.

Meanwhile Sylvester Ingham was perplexed; he had not really meant to waken the warm interest, which Lisbeth was too unlearned in the art of concealment to disguise from his practised eyes.

To be sure she charmed him; his heart went out unbidden toward her, with a tenderness he had not felt for any woman since his youth. But as for binding her future to his by an open engagement, he did not think of it for a moment. And yet he felt it would become awkward if things went on; what could he do; should he win her consent to a secret promise? and then let what would

come, for the present all would be well, and beyond the present he was not wont to take thought or care; yet, so strong over him was Lisbeth's unacknowledged influence, even his cold, selfish heart recoiled from winning from her a promise to keep a secret from her uncle; for, he so well remembered one of the very first of his long conversations with Lisbeth, during which she had said, in her child-like, confiding way—

“My uncle has given me what I call a code of honour to keep with him, and first among its rules is, that I am never to have a secret from him, and never to give anything away, without first asking his permission; of course I do not mean trifling things.”

And with a smile she had added—

“I believe he thinks I am such a novice in the ways of this great world, called society, that I need, oh, so many rules, but I do not know why this one, for, what have I to give but trifles?”

And the smile had deepened on her face as she said—

"You know I do not come into my property till I am twenty-one ; I am so glad, for I never like to take care of money ; all I like about it is the making other people happy with it."

And then Lisbeth had told of her plans for new cottages for the fisher-folk, and simple improvements about the village and surroundings of G——, unconscious all the time that her uncle's words had aught to do with anything save money,—but full well Mr. Ingham knew it was the girl's heart, not her wealth, Mr. Andrew Endicott sought to guard.

"But no," he said to himself, "I cannot be bound by an open engagement, I cannot—sacrifice my freedom for that ; she is a fair—sweet flower for a summer-day pastime, but—she would straightway wither in the life that—
is life to me ; better Ethel than Lisbeth, if I—must be one or the other."

He was walking back and forth on the broad—piazza of the hotel as he thought thus. It was—night ; Lisbeth was sleeping the sleep of child, dreaming the dreams of a maiden, and—
it was while she dreamed thus, that he decid—

to let their brief acquaintance end as a summer-time recreation.

"It has been pleasant to me," he said ; "she is a child, she will forget."

But the heart of man is weak ; and Sylvester Ingham was selfish ; and when the next day came, like that far-famed flower of the western plains, that in all changes of wind or weather points its leaves unvaryingly to the same point of the compass, so he found himself thinking of Lisbeth again.

It was the last of their days among the mountains ; on the morrow they were to leave.

Lisbeth was awake with the birds, and like them she was singing when she met Mr. Ingham that morning ; she did not know he had passed down the glen before her, and when a sudden turn in the narrow path brought her suddenly face to face with him, she blushed, a blush as rosy as the flush on the fleecy clouds of the dawning day. Her hands were full of flowers, as on her birthday morning—flowers, that she had gathered with a heart as free as it was then from any thought that that

day was to be unlike all other days to her! though with an instinct, subtle as that which bids birds fly southward because winter is coming, even before there is a breath of frost in the air, Lisbeth was conscious of a something thrilling in her heart, and making her long, as she had not done for weeks, to be a child again, folded once more in her father's arms. The earthly father's, she had no thought of the "Everlasting Arms" so ready, if she had but sought their shelter, to enfold her safer than any earthly father could.

It was a song of the summer she sang, no echo of a sigh in it,—

"Summer, clad in regal beauty,
Crowns the sloping hills ;
Sleeps in quiet shady valleys,
Laughs in rippling rills.

"Summer, with her wealth of fragrance,
Floats on every breeze—
Whispers in her sweetest language
To the swaying trees."

As she ceased, she stretched out her hand in response to Sylvester Ingham's morning greet-

ing,—such a little hand, dimpled and soft, but brown with the kiss of sunbeams; and as he took it, he called her, “Lisbeth.” “Do you remember,” she said, “you asked me what was the language of the mountain peaks? Tell me now what is this ‘sweetest language summer whispers to the swaying trees;’ the sweetest word of my life, I know what it is; but I wonder what will be the sweetest language?” and she lifted her eyes, full of questioning, to his, softly adding—

“The sweetest word, it is the memory of my father’s calling me his ‘Lily-bell,’ but the language, what will it be?”

Was it strange he told her then—strange, his resolves faded and vanished like the morning mist—the heart of man is weak.

When he ceased speaking, Lisbeth, whose gaze had been so fearless, stood before him with head bowed and hands clasped, the flowers fallen from them, fallen and scattered at her feet, for the wind to play over, the sunshine to wither, poor flowers, broken so ruthlessly from stalk and stem!

Just a few brief words were all her heart was conscious of.

And there,—in the stillness of that mountain glen, with the blue sky overhead, the morning light falling on her, with the flowers at her feet, there had come to Elizabeth Endicott, as it comes to us all at one time or another, “the future to the present.”—The gift, the dearest and the sweetest, or the bitterest and the saddest of life’s gifts—love.

XX.

LISBETH wondered did Alexander Gordon guess aught of the story of that morning?

The glen path was a mossy-way, cushioned, too, by the soft pine-needles that strewed the ground well-nigh an inch deep in some places—a footfall might have come and gone unheard.

Just once, she could not tell why, a sudden sense of a presence, not Mr. Ingham's, had come over her, but she saw no one, and she gave it but little heed.

Yes, he did know,—love is so quick to read,—and yet it was only a glimpse he caught, a shadowy broken glimpse, half-veiled by the interlacing of the gently-swaying hemlock branches, and the flitting, dancing sunlight. But that vision of scarce a moment, for years and years afterward, came unbidden, to haunt him “like a scrap of a ballad rhyme.”

After that—but what need to tell.

It was late in the afternoon when at last Mr. Gordon joined the group on the hotel piazza. They were just starting forth for one more look at the rainbow that always shone in the mountain cascade at sunset.

“Where have you been all day?” more than one eager voice queried; and as became a man with no hint of pain in his tone, he told of a long ramble far up to the highest of all the mountain outlooks.

“Did you go without a guide?”

It was Lisbeth who thus asked, and he answered—

“Yes, without a guide.”

She did not guess the bitter truth of his words, for he had so invested her with all sweet and sacred charms, that he was left in a dark wood, guideless and alone, when first he knew she could love one so unworthy of her as Sylvester Ingham; for though he was an attractive man, refined in manner, and had been sought and caressed by society for years, there was yet a lack of sincerity about him

that Alexander Gordon could scarcely understand Lisbeth's not discovering; a false hollowness in his sentiments, a bitter sceptical unbelief in his words and estimate of serious things, that seemed all out of harmony with her simple, truthful nature. But the feeling passed away; he had met and struggled with it, and "true love is confidence," and it does not mistrust its object; he had faith that Lisbeth would rise above the present glamour, that shut her eyes to the fact that Sylvester Ingham's heart was empty of that which her father had taught her was true and right in principle, deed, and word; and he could wait, though the waiting-time be hard—harder than he then dreamed. Alexander Gordon was noble, too; it had always been true of him :

“ To do him any wrong was to beget
A kindness from him, for his heart was rich,
Of such fine mould, if you sow'd therein
The seed of hate, it blossomed Charity.”

And he conquered the anger that at first he felt toward Mr. Ingham, crushed it out of his heart as resolutely as he crushed the grass

and moss of the mountain path beneath his firm tread.

But it was hard to come back to look at Lisbeth, so much more quiet than her wont, yet with a light on her face that only gladness gives; a contradictory light even that day, for she did not understand why Mr. Ingham tarried by her side so much less than usual; why, after their return from the glen, he chatted so gaily with Ethel, almost turning away from her; why, when he plucked a handful of hare-bells from an overhanging rock, he gave half to Ethel and half to herself. Mr. Gordon was her companion on that walk to the cascade; he helped her carefully over the rough places that now and then intercepted their progress; once he lingered, and Lisbeth lingered too, while with a harsh hand he tore the ribbon-like, smooth bark from a mountain birch that grew in among the hemlocks and pines.

As he did it, with a look of pity on her face, Lisbeth touched the place, saying, "Poor tree!" And then, though he thought he had

conquered himself, for the first and only time of his life Alexander Gordon spoke bitterly to Lisbeth.

"It will heal again," he said; "it is but a tree—it is not a heart, Lisbeth."

He, too, called her Lisbeth that day.

XXI.

THE light in Lisbeth's face that Alexander Gordon recognised as the light of gladness, but that had, even when first he saw it, something contradictory in it, was in truth a reflection of her heart.

For Mr. Ingham's apparent devotion to Ethel, when he had told her of love for herself, was not the only thing that Lisbeth did not quite understand.

She was conscious of an undefined sense of dissatisfaction with herself,—that as weeks came and went amounted to restlessness.

She had been reared in an atmosphere of truthfulness, not only in word, but in deed, and thought, and when Sylvester Ingham had said to her—

"Let our love be a secret between us, our secret, Lisbeth, and hide it, child, from all eyes but mine," even though she had con-


sented, she could not entirely silence the memory of her father's teaching—

“Always be open with me, Lisbeth, open as the daylight.” And her uncle's recent injunction, “Have no secret from me, Lisbeth.”

She had said this to Mr. Ingham, as reluctantly she had consented to his wish, while his arguments only half silenced the unrest of her heart; hence she was disturbed, and yet there was such sweetness in the “happy secret,” as he called it, she did not heed the feeling sufficiently to be willing to recognise that it was the voice of conscience speaking in her heart.

For though she was wont to be so strong of will with others, with Sylvester Ingham she was weak.

There was, too, another cause for Lisbeth's gladness having a contradictory element in it, another whisper of conscience that she as resolutely refused to heed: it came from the fact that she accepted Mr. Ingham's every word, even when something in her told her they were not after her father's belief. Accepted them as unquestionably as a child



reaches out its hand after flowers and weeds alike. Herein lay her chief danger, for her heart was like a mirror, catching and reflecting on its smooth surface Mr. Ingham's thoughts; thus the sense of unrest, that ever since the days following her father's death, when she had first admitted rebellious questionings of God's love into her mind, deepened rather than lessened, after every conversation with Sylvester Ingham that went beyond mere surface topics, as most of their long conversations did.

Lisbeth, those days, was like one walking amid the ruins of Ancient Rome; one who calls the misty veil of the twilight's violet hues beautiful and tender; who smiles as it softens outline of ruin and decay, never heeding the poisonous miasma, and subtle mischief-working vapour that forms the transparent haze; for she heeded not the mist of unbelief and the acted though not uttered falsehoods that were weaving their gossamer web, their tangle of temptation, about her soul, with a well-nigh invisible thread; yet a thread

that every day grew stronger and harder to break, heeded them not, because their very shadowy soft refinement of utterance, like the mist that veiled the ruins, hid the rude jagged outlines of unbelief to which they led; just as the wrong of her tacit falsehood was hidden by the dearness and the sweetness of her love; but only hidden for the time, for such mists always lift, always reveal ruins at last.

A recent writer, wise not only in the knowledge of the schools, but with the wisdom, too, of a heart that loved humanity and thrilled to its needs, has left recorded, in a sermon on the Wilderness Temptation, words that well depict Lisbeth's state of mind at that time. He writes: "What proves those three temptations to have been very subtle and dangerous and terrible, is this, that we cannot see at first sight that they were temptations at all." Mark the words, at *first sight*. And he adds: "The very danger of these spiritual temptations is, that they do not look like temptations; they do not look ugly, absurd, wrong; they look pleasant, reasonable, right."

How many of us can echo this in our experience. If temptation had come to us in the repellant form of the recognised wrongs of life, had come knocking at our heart's door, how loudly would we have said, Nay, to its entrance; how securely we would have barred that door with barrier and bolt. But the silent growth of pride in the heart, the secret whisper that "one is different from his fellows, safer than they, more favoured by God," herein lies the chief danger to most of us."

Certainly it proved so to Elizabeth Endicott. Reared as she had been, if temptation had come to her like some wild storm, dash and foam-crested waves in pitiless fury on the beach, she would have resolutely laid her hands on the anchor of her light barque, and said "No, no, I will not leave the safe shore, I will not venture on the storm-tossed waves;" when it came as it did, alluring as a child's voice calling her to gather flowers, she went forth, never so much as heeding the real meaning of the prayer, "Lord, lead me not into temptation;" and thus she turned from the

unsatisfied feeling, the nameless unrest that was sent to warn her, hushing its voice, so that she even said to herself, and thought the words true,—thought so for weeks—

“The days are all sunshine;” while she said to Sylvester Ingham—

“Do you remember how I said, as we came down the mountain path that first morning” (and he knew the morning she meant), “we were going into the clouds, do you remember? and it was all a mistake; there has been nothing but sunshine since, no storm, no cloud.”

And yet as she spoke the cloud was about her.

Lisbeth never forgot his reply—

“If clouds do come between us, Lisbeth,” he called her by the name they called her at home; “have you faith in me to know clouds are but mist to eyes bright enough to see through them?”

Softly she answered—

“Yes, faith enough.”

And so, he let her go on believing in him.

XXII.

THE Endicotts lingered late at the Manor that year. Till the very last week of their stay Mr. Gordon and Sylvester Ingham continued to come for the Sundays, those days that were so full of the wondrous, tranquil beauty that is the benediction of autumn Sabbaths.

The village church was full five miles distant from the Manor by the carriage road, and four and more by the shady walk by the river bank.

Lisbeth always chose to make one of the walking party, and so did her cousin Ethel, and either going or returning Sylvester Ingham never failed to be Lisbeth's companion.

These were almost the only quiet interviews they had; and sometimes, Ethel, by what at first seemed accident, but that afterward Lisbeth felt sure was design, contrived to interrupt even them.

Lisbeth had no experience in being interfered with; she resented it, and thus there sprang up between the cousins the beginning of an estrangement.

Sometimes she thought, too, that Alexander Gordon strove to prevent Mr. Ingham's joining her, and when he could not do that, she always felt he followed them with a gloomy gaze as they wandered from the well-trodden path down to the river's sandy beach, or under the trees through the shady woodland way.

But Lisbeth never felt the same irritation toward Mr. Gordon's interference that she did toward Ethel's; there was always a protecting kindness in his manner to her, that won her confidence, though her complaint was still, "he treats me as though I were a child."

It was the very last of their country Sabbaths, when she said thus to Sylvester Ingham, adding, "It always seems to me, though I cannot explain it, as if he held my fate in his hand, I mean," and she looked up with one of her brightest smiles, "if any one but you could do that."

Lisbeth had another talk, the memory of which lasted as long as the memory of her morning talk with Sylvester Ingham.

It was with Mr. Gordon ; it seemed strange it followed so closely her light words that he seemed to hold her fate.

She was sitting on the bank of the rippling brook, in a sheltered nook, where, though the autumn wind was chill, the rays of the westering sun fell warm and bright about her.

When he joined her she was tossing the white pebbles, that strewed the path above her, into the clear shallow water, where each one as it fell stirred a hundred tiny ripples ; she looked up as he approached with the look of questioning that so often was on her face when with him, and with no preface as to what led to the words, she said abruptly—

“I live so in the future, my life seems like one long day-dream.”

“How can you live in the future,” Mr. Gordon replied, “when you cannot see it? Why not change your words, Miss Lisbeth, and live *for* the future?”

"Why," she murmured, lifting her eyes to his with one of her quick responsive glances, "why, because I love my day-dreams, they are all beautiful; and if, when the future comes, it is not, why, then, I must bear it as well as I can."

And she laughed, a light-hearted little laugh, low and sweet, as she added—

"And, however dark the present, it never can take away the future, because, except in our thoughts, we never can touch it, you know," and again she laughed as she said—

"And I am queen of my thoughts, so I am queen of my future; I like so much the having the garden of thought all for my own realm."

Then Mr. Gordon let fall a shadow over Lisbeth's gaiety.

"Have you thought," he asked, "that the waking from your day-dreams will be all the sadder in proportion as the dreams have been sweeter than the reality proves?"

"I know," Lisbeth answered, while an undertone of sadness crept into her voice, and a look of tender pathos shone in her eyes.

"I remember it was so—that day."

Mr. Gordon knew what she meant, for in her talks with him she was wont to turn backward to the day of their meeting, the day of her father's death.

"Yes, I remember," softly she continued; "I had such beautiful dreams for my life with my father, dreams, that ended all in a moment, that gave place to"—

And she did not say what; but again Mr. Gordon understood her, understood her so well that he was silent, looking away, while he tossed the white pebbles into the brooklet, as she had been doing when he joined her.

Presently Lisbeth spoke in a voice so low he had to bend forward to catch her words—

"Everything is so changed to me since that day," she said. "It seems years and years ago since I was a child at home, since when, however restless my heart had been, it grew calm at twilight as my father held my hand in his, and I told him of my day, that ended as the stars came out in the blue sky, 'our hour' we used to call that time between the daylight

and the dark; yes, everything is so changed now; tell me why?"

She was so like a child still in her trustful appeal for help; this girl who had grown up as a flower.

"I remember it all so well," she continued, "yet it seems far, far off—the shining stars; the soft sweet music of the waves breaking on the beach; the faint murmur of the wind among the trees;" and she lifted her hand as though to listen, while she whispered—

"I almost thought I heard the dear, dear music of my home by the sea; I almost thought I caught the fragrance of the roses that bloomed before my father left me."

And again there fell a silence between them, which she was the one to break, repeating—

"Yes, it is all so changed. Is it"—and a look of fear stole over her face, while her voice trembled—"because I have lost the faith I had then? will the 'tree tops never brush close against the sky' for me any more, as they used to do, and all because 'I am farther off from heaven than when I was a child'? Ah, tell me!"


And Mr. Gordon told her, "yes," and then he tried to tell her why.

"But I did have doubts then," Lisbeth said ; "and everything seemed to slip away from me in the darkness of grief that came into my soul after my father's death ; only it was different doubt, such a different loss of faith in God than it is now."

Little did she know how different, for the one was the rebellion of a heart unlearned in sorrow and submission, but still a child's heart ; while the present questions were subtle and dangerous, as hidden reefs beneath treacherous seas.

But Mr. Gordon could tell her this only by a hint. And did she take the hint ? he asked himself, as their conversation was interrupted by the coming of Sylvester Ingham and Ethel.

A bright talk followed, but spite its brightness the pleasure was all on the surface to Lisbeth, for try though she did she could not throw off the nameless sadness that oppressed her, and that deepened as the evening wore on ; for something was stirring in her heart to



which Mr. Ingham's words could bring no rest,
his brilliant wit no soothing.

"What ails you to-night, Lisbeth?" he said;
and though his tone was gentle, his glance
harder as ever it had been, she could find no
answer to his question; she felt like one
wandering mist-bewildered through some path
familiar, and yet strange.

It was not until just before the good-
nights were said that Lisbeth brightened, and
even it was only for a brief time; for when
alone in the quiet of her own room the sadness
came over her again; she could not sleep, as
was her wont, the peaceful, refreshing sleep
of youth; she lay wide awake, with open
eyes peering out into the darkness of the
room; and a soul looking out from the cloud-
mist that enveloped the clear shining of right
and truth in her heart; while over and over
it repeated—

"Is it because I have lost my childhood's
faith? am I drifting out,—out,—where?"

But though she thus asked, she was un-
warned in the first steps of struggle with self;

unlearned in seeking Christ's help where she was too weak and ignorant to go alone, she knew naught of the ceaseless efforts by which we have to rise above ourselves, our temptations, our sorrows, and may we not add, sometimes above our joys too?

When the morning came, Lisbeth, with the impatience of a wilful child, turned from Alexander Gordon's warning, and the grave thoughts that had come to her in the stillness and darkness of the night, saying to herself, "Sylvester knows, he says," and yet her heart failed her when she tried to analyse what he said.

XXIII.

MR. ANDREW ENDICOTT'S city home was on one of the broadest avenues of the city of broad avenues. A stately home, made beautiful and inviting by every adornment of art and luxury. The windows of Lisbeth's room overlooked a sheltered park, where the grass was as green as in mid-summer till quite into the winter; where the leaves clung to the trees as though they never would fall to make way for the buds of another spring. But they fell at last, leaves always do, nature is ever an index to the story of human lives.

It had been decided that Lisbeth should not return home before the spring.

"My time is so fully occupied," she wrote Mrs. Blinn, "the hours fly, and it will not seem long before the winter too will speed away. I am to have masters in German and

in music after Christmas, and a few lessons in painting to help me find the secret of atmosphere; the magic touch that catches a cloud-scape, out of what?—only a few colours on my palette; a few touches of my brush on the canvas!"

And then, with one of her sudden changes from gaiety to thoughtfulness, she wrote: "It seems so to hint the story of our lives, for just a few colours, a few touches of the brush, and lo! we paint even with our own hands clouds in the sky!"

Mrs. Blinn read the words over more than once; she never quite understood Lisbeth: "Was the child in earnest?" thus she queried: "Did she have some deep meaning underlying her words, as Mr. Grant did in his sermons?" (which Mrs. Blinn was wont to call "most excellent," though sometimes a little too high for one of her ability).

She was at a loss how to reply to Lisbeth's note; she was sorely disappointed, too, at her decision not to return for so many months.

"The child will slip away from me," she

sighed ; "my lady-bird forget her simple home-songs;" and good Mrs. Blinn required to rub the glasses of her spectacles more than once before her answer was completed.

But at last the task was accomplished ; the letter folded and sealed after the safe old fashion of wax and taper.

A letter full of home-items, telling of the garden, of how Michael had tied up the rose bushes in their winter caps of straw, and covered the lily beds with dry leaves, so that the frost should not hurt the tender things. Then followed a full description of every animal about the place ; from her father's white horse to Tabby the cat, who was lying on the hearth rug purring her low pussy song as Mrs. Blinn wrote. A page was dedicated, too, to what Lisbeth called, "neighbourhood gossip," and full of messages from one and another who had known her all her life long.

Another page gave a detailed account of the fever that had raged among the fishermen's families down below the cliff ; of how little Milly Danforth had sickened and died ;

and how her last words were : "Give my love to Miss Lisbeth." "She was holding the china lamb you gave her, when she went off," Mrs. Blinn wrote, "and somehow she set such store by it they left it in her little hand when they put her into her coffin. It seemed sort of unchristian-like, but Mr. Grant said nothing against it ; in fact, some say he made a kind of sermon out of it ; you know the fisher-folk need to be appealed to through their imaginations."

Only in one line in that long letter, did Mrs. Blinn touch upon the new physician who had come to fill Doctor Endicott's place.

"A kindly-spoken man," she wrote ; "but, child, I cannot bear the sight of him ; it brings back memories of the past so ; old woman that I am, I go out of my way time after time to avoid meeting that chaise and the new doctor."

And at those words the spectacle glasses had not prevented the falling of more than one tear-drop on the paper, they left only tiny marks, but Lisbeth saw them.

The letter ended after the model of letters in Mrs. Blinn's youth, with a few words of pious counsel, enforced by a verse of poetry, wise little lines, that caused the good woman much research to find :

"I will tell you how to live,
Heartily and truly,
With sweet honey in your hive,
Like a bee in July.
Like the bee be out and work,
When the sun is shining,
Never in a corner lurk."

XXIV.

LIFE in the city was more lonely to Lisbeth than it had been at the Manor. The deep mourning of her dress precluded her sharing in many of her aunt and cousins' amusements, that the informality of country life had not interfered with.

She had, too, but little heart, or natural taste for what are termed the pleasures of society; and with the exception of little Lucille she had grown farther away, rather than nearer in sympathy to her cousins, as weeks had widened into months; becoming more and more conscious of the dissimilarity between them, which she had instinctively felt at first.

There was another cause for this, too: Lisbeth was unused to concealment of any kind, and it gave a restraint to her natural frankness of utterance and manner; while the sense

of dissatisfaction with herself, deepened, and re-acted in making her dissatisfied with others ; she was, in fact, beginning to feel her promise, to keep secret her engagement to Sylvester Ingham, a burden ; rather than the something so sweet as she had at first called it, called it, even while she shrank from disobeying her uncle.

“If I could go back, and had never consented to concealment,” she so often wished those days ; “if I had only said at first that I *must* tell my uncle, Ethel, and all of them ; then this perplexity and annoyance would have been saved.”

And Lisbeth wept bitterly as she murmured : “Then I never would have lost the possession of truthfulness out of my heart ; the golden treasure, my father used to call it ; but now it is gone, and I cannot get it back, I have, by my own consent, acted a falsehood, even though I have not uttered it.”

For Lisbeth knew she had striven more than once to give her uncle and aunt, Ethel and others, wrong impressions ; while she had con-

sented to meet Mr. Ingham, time after time, since they came to the city, and concealed those meetings.

Yet, though she was lacking in the strength of self-mastery which was needed to help her rise above it, she had a boundless courage, an entire self-forgetfulness, which made her brave and eager to bear all the blame herself, if there ever was blame to be borne, for the mistake, she then called it by no harsher name.

Beside this, another shadow had crept over her heart, for with the quick intuition of a woman's nature, which reaches conclusions rather by insight than argument, she felt, while she could scarce grasp it even in her thoughts, that a something had come between her and Mr. Ingham, and for that, too, she blamed herself, not him.

Lisbeth's is a commonplace story, old and oft repeated, as such heart-stories are. Troubling springing out of little things, the tiny cloud in the sky that grows till the blue is all hidden, till at last the storm breaks.

Christmas was over and gone before *this*

happened to her, over and gone, before this undefined "something" assumed a tangible form. It was the last day of the year, that year that had brought so much to Elizabeth Endicott, that had taken so much from her too. It was almost time for it to fold up its wings and fly away, where?—where do the dead years go?

All day Lisbeth had been restless; toward sunset she went out, though it was bleak and cold; she could not stay in the house any longer, for somehow it seemed like a prison to her; she felt such a wild longing for her father, such a homesick longing for the freedom of her old life; an eager yearning to hear the waves breaking on the shore below the cliff, and the wind sighing among the pines.

The avenue was crowded with a throng of gaily-dressed passers, smiling women, and courtly men, all hurrying home out of the cold and the approaching dark; "all but me," Lisbeth said to herself, "all but me hurrying home." Everything jarred on her, she wanted to be alone; for a moment she felt as though

she would like to fly away with the ending year, and be out of it all ; for the perplexities and annoyances, that are so wont to spring out of concealment, had thickened about her during the last few days ; her estrangement with her cousin Ethel widened ; she understood her less and less.

“ If I could tell my uncle of my engagement, I think I would feel like myself again,” she said. “ I never knew concealment before, I think it is that that oppresses me.” And it was, and something more. She turned from the avenue at the corner, and went into the park which the windows in her room overlooked.

The leaves that had clung to the trees so long had all fallen now ; they lay thick on the grass, and as when she was a child she used to leave the garden walks, to run ankle deep among the violets and daisies of the fields about their home, so now she left the broad trim paths that intersected the park, to tread among the fallen leaves.

Their rustling music, though it was like a

dirge for the ending year, was soothing to her, and when a sudden gust of wind caught and whirled the yellow and brown things in circling eddies about her, she laughed; her mood was strange even to herself. It was very quiet in the little park; far away seemed all the confusion and crowd of the great city. The rumbling of wheels, the incessant pulsing of sound, came to her like the beat of a muffled drum.

She did not heed the deepening twilight; she never had felt fear, and yet she started when a quick step approached, sounding sharp and clear in the frosty air—started only for a moment, for at once she recognised Sylvester Ingham.

They had often met in the park before, and yet, somehow, she had not looked for his coming then; it was later than she was wont to be out alone.

"I am so glad it is you," she said impetuously, without a word of greeting, and she laid her hand on his arm, saying in a pleading voice—

"Will you tell my uncle of our engagement to-night? will you let this time of concealment end with the ending year?"

She did not look up to see the impatient frown on his face as he replied, "Why?"

And yet she felt there was no heartiness in his tone; and with the eagerness gone from her manner, the pleading from her voice, she said—this girl of contradictions—

"No, no; do not tell him if you would rather not." And then there followed words that made Lisbeth ever after remember that hour as the bitterest hour of her life, though life held many sad hours for her.

For it was then that Sylvester Ingham, the man who had won her love, cast it from him as lightly as he pushed aside the fallen leaves from beneath his foot.

Then that he uttered cold, selfish words that sprang from a fickle, shallow heart, revealing that he was tired of the love he had found it easy to win; tired, when the zest of seeking the prize was over. Words to which Lisbeth made no answer; and yet he shrank

from her gaze as she lifted her eyes and looked at him, with a look that seemed to read his very heart—a look that the deepening twilight shadows did not hide.

Neither did she reply when he added words colder and more selfish; only once during the whole interview did she speak, after that she was silent—silent as on the morning when he had told her of his love; only then her heart was singing, “He loves me, he loves me!” she was silent from the wonder and joy of it; while now her heart was crying, “All ended, ended!” and she was silent from the grief and hurt of it.


Silently, too, they turned homeward; on the doorstep they parted.

“And so it is ended,” he said, “I understand you?”

And she bowed her head and answered: “Ended; you understand.”

And then Sylvester Ingham went down the broad avenue, where the throng of passers was less, for twilight was fast deepening into the early darkness of the short winter’s day,

and as he went he hummed a light tune, thinking meanwhile: "Well, so it has come to an end, and she did it herself; it has been smooth sailing for the past few months; I was getting a bit tired of the thing; it is time for her to wake from her day-dream—she is but a child, it will be only a dream; she will soon forget me when she finds I am not the ideal she thought"—and he shrugged his shoulders as he murmured half aloud, "And when she ceases to love she will forget." But though Sylvester Ingham had sounded far, he was ignorant of the depths of Lisbeth's nature.



XXV.

WHEN Mr. Ingham left her, Lisbeth did not go into the house ; she stood still and watched his receding figure, and then, swiftly as a bird flies, she retraced her steps and re-entered the park. It was quite dark there ; only as the flaring light from the gas-jet at the entrance flashed across the central walk ; but she turned straightway from it into a side path. When quite in shadow she leaned against one of the leafless trees, while, with a look unlike any look that had ever been on her fair face before, she hastily drew off the glove from her little hand, and with a sudden thrill of pain in every fibre of her being, she drew off, too, from her third finger, a tiny circlet of gold, a little ring, the only one of all the ornaments in her mother's cabinet she had chosen to wear.

Passionately she kissed it, and then she let the little thing fall down, down among

the fallen leaves of the dead summer, while passionately, yes, passionately, she stamped her foot on the fallen thing.

It was only a golden ring, it was lost there among the dead leaves !

A ring that one day, one of the sunny days of their love, Sylvester Ingham had lightly drawn from her finger, and slipped on again with a word of love and promise, saying—

“When the time to tell of our betrothal comes, you shall have, Lisbeth, a jewelled ring, sparkling as never jewel sparkled before.”

After that one passionate outburst, as is the way with quick impulsive natures, Lisbeth was calm ; the strange, hard look went from her face, while in its place a dull patience and bewilderment came. And then again she started at the sound of approaching footsteps ; yet with no sense of surprise, she looked up as Alexander Gordon stood before her.

“Have you come for me ?” she said, “come to take me home ? Yes, I will go,” and unresistingly she let him place her cold little

hand on his arm. It never occurred to her to ask how he came there, how he knew she was alone out in the dark, and it never occurred to her either to offer a word of explanation; only as they passed out of the park under the full light of the brilliant gas-jet, she shut her eyes, and put her hand before her face as though to hide the story of pain written there.

A minute later, they, too, parted on the doorstep.

"Miss Lisbeth has a headache, and begs to be excused," was the message a servant brought, when, half an hour afterward, Mrs. Endicott had sent to inquire why Lisbeth did not appear at the dinner-table; and that was all the gay company in the brilliant room below knew of the story of the girl alone in the darkened room above.

Evening had well-nigh waned when a note was handed Ethel; she read it with a frown on her face, and yet with a blush and half smile, and she said—

"Mr. Ingham sends you all good-bye and a

happy New Year, dear people ; he is called suddenly away on business."

The next morning Ethel repeated the words to Lisbeth as they met at the entrance of the breakfast-room, and she added—

"Are you better? is your headache all gone?"

And Lisbeth answered—

"Yes, I am better."

And then the door opened and a chorus of voices greeted them with merry shouts of, "Happy, happy New Year."

XXVI.

"NEW YEAR day, with the dead year to bury."—That had been Lisbeth's thought on waking.

"And I have no hymn to sing over its grave," she said bitterly, "no prayer to lay it away with,—for my hymns, I think I have forgotten them all; my prayers,—how can I pray, when this bitterness is in my heart; when I have shut myself away from God, by thinking all these strange thoughts, that bewilder me so,—for, what do I believe, I do not know."

And bitterly she wept, hiding her face in her pillow to hush the sound of the sobs, which shook her slight frame like long-drawn sighs. And then, as is so often the way in hours of intense emotion, she fell into reasoning about herself and the sorrow that had come to her, as though she were reasoning

about some one else. She seemed to see herself as one sees a figure in a mirage; as something so near and close, and yet so far away, when we would fain approach and touch it.

"I suppose it is right," she murmured, "that we should reap what we sow, but it seems so hard, so hard, that our past must always hold the seed of our future, and yet, I suppose it is right, that I should be deceived, for I have been deceiving, and though in such a different way, were not the wrong impressions I have striven to give, just as truly deceiving as Mr. Ingham's giving me the impression that he loved me, when,—but oh, he must, he must have meant what he said at first,—that mountain day, he must have meant it, and afterward."

Then her thought returned to that one brief hour of the yesterday, that seemed so like hours and hours; rather than only a short sixty seconds of time.

"I think I could bear it better," she sobbed, "if it had been different; but this hurts me so. If I could only go back, and be a child again. If I could only pray as I

used to, but, when I try, it all shuts down dark about me. What have I done, to shut myself away from the balm of prayer, what have I done?"

And with one of her sudden characteristic changes she lifted her head, while a light shone from her tear-dimmed eyes, and a half smile, sadder than a sigh, hovered about her lips as she murmured—

"Why, of course I cannot pray when I cannot obey the command, 'Forgive, if ye have aught against any,' and I cannot do it yet, no, I cannot forgive, but the hardness will not go out of my heart till I do."

For Lisbeth knew there was anger in her heart, anger that seemed to spring out of a sorrow closely akin to repentance, that she had ever consented to listen to Sylvester Ingham's subtle suggestion—those suggestions that had led her, for the last few months, to ask of her heart when she had thought of serious truths, not "What do I believe?" but, "What do I not?"

She resented, while she was yet bowing to

the influence that had led her to forget, "that it never comes within the range of the Spirit of God to gratify idle curiosity by the presentation of curious theories;" had led her to forget, that while the scientists may speculate on fossil and strata, descent and origin, the spirit of one who would be a follower of Christ must be the spirit of a worshipper, not a questioner.

Dimly realising all this, it was no wonder that for a time she felt bitterly toward the man who had tempted, and led her thoughts to rove from the safe teachings of her father; who had led her to strive to lose *faith* in knowledge, falsely so called. "Forgive," and again she wept, as she repeated, "No, I cannot forgive—and Ethel, I cannot forgive her either—oh, if I could only bring this great trouble, this great unkindness, and leave it with Christ as I used to bring my troubles in my childhood, and leave them with my father; but Christ seems so far off now, Christ, who used to seem so near when I was a child; I remember I could shut my eyes then, and feel almost

as though if I reached out my hand, it was held in His hand of Love, even though I could not see or actually feel the clasp—was that faith?—but that was when I was a child!”

“I wonder why I think this morning of a sentence I read before I left home; I remember it so well. I was in the library, sitting in the broad window-seat, and my father was writing at his desk. I wonder why memory seems to-day like that cleft up among the mountains, where we called aloud, waking echoes with our words that came back to us the very same, only softly, like whispers. Echoing, echoing through my heart, come back to me the words of my beautiful, happy day-dream days. I said, I loved my day-dreams; I said, I was queen of my future because queen of my thoughts—poor queen; dethroned now. Where is my crown? trodden in the dust. Where are its jewels? all strewn and crushed. Where is my sceptre? the fairy wand of love. Where? lost and broken.

“But that tiresome little sentence keeps

repeating itself over so in my mind : 'When any one has offended me, I try to raise my soul so high that the offence cannot touch it.'

"Oh, if I could do that, but I cannot ; no, not yet."

And even as she thus said, the bitterness and anger toward Mr. Ingham seemed to vanish from her heart, and again, woman-like, she was striving to blame herself for all that had happened ; not him, not him.

"I am so ignorant," she said ; "I know so little, and he so much, what he said was true ; I was sweet enough for a mountain daisy ; sweet enough for a summer pastime ; only the words hurt me so ; but, I am no flower for one who loves as he loves, this great gay world—only it hurts me so."

Just here, Lisbeth's musings were interrupted, and a little later she had gone downstairs, to be met by the happy New Year greetings.

Gone, with her face a trifle paler than its wont ; a tread a bit slower, with a languid

weariness about it, unlike her usual bird-like fleetness, and with a pride in her heart that had sprung into life as quickly as tropical plant opens into bloom.

A pride that made her strong to hide the hurt that had fallen on her; a determination that, whatever the man she had trusted might be, neither by word nor look would she hint the secret that had become a pain, and that she had concealed when it was a gladness.

And she felt, too—for love did not die easily in Lisbeth's heart—that none should blame Sylvester Ingham by any knowledge of his fickleness learned from her; she was as eager to hide his weakness as if it had been some treasure; she even avoided Alexander Gordon, when later in the day she met him, because instinctively she felt he knew something of it all. Though she felt no more curiosity than she did at the time, to know how he happened to come to her in the park.

A simple enough occurrence if she had asked for its explanation. He was coming up the avenue when he had met Mr. Ingham, who

M.

passed him with a slight, hasty recognition, and a cold cynical look still lingering on his face, as a sort of echo of his words to Lisbeth; and then Mr. Gordon had seen her standing on the marble steps of her uncle's mansion; had seen her turn and speed toward the park, which she had entered—and his love told him the rest—and that was why, tenderly as a mother would have sought a hurt child, he had followed Lisbeth, led her home, and parted from her silently on the doorstep, and yet had not left her till the door had opened, and he had seen her safe across the threshold.

XXVII.

IT was only a week after that New Year day that Ethel and Fanny Endicott left home, to visit a friend who resided in a distant city, and it was the day before their departure when Ethel said—

“It will be so pleasant to meet Mr. Ingham, you know he is there,” and she looked toward Lisbeth as she added, “One always is so glad to meet a home friend in a strange place.”

But if Ethel sought to read any tell-tale story on her cousin's face, she was disappointed, for Lisbeth's head was bowed over the dainty piece of embroidery, a tangle of flowers and grasses, which apparently quite absorbed her attention.

“It seems to me you do nothing but count stitches,” Ethel continued, with an accent of impatience in her tone, and still looking at Lisbeth.

"I am positively tired with the sight of that piece of work ; you have toiled over it for the last week, as though it were a life-task that must be accomplished."

Lisbeth in reply made one of her strange answers, as Ethel called them, saying—

"Perhaps it is—counting stitches ; I wonder if it is not a life-work, for, I suppose," she added softly, "our thoughts and deeds are but stitches in life's pattern."

"Was there ever a girl so full of fancies ?" Ethel responded, "positively morbid fancies I call them, and Mr. Ingham said sometimes he thought so too.

"Do you know, Lisbeth, he calls you Little Puritan, because he says you always tack a moral on to everything, just like a boy fastens a streamer on to his kite ? What are you afraid of, little cousin ?" and Ethel's tone was almost mocking as she asked—

"Do you fear that unless you give us a moral, by way of interpretation, your thoughts will be so high they will fly above us commonplace people ?"

Perchance sharp words would have followed, for Lisbeth was hasty of temper, and wounded at heart ; but at that moment Mrs. Endicott entered in a glow of pleasurable excitement, for she had to announce her sudden decision to accompany her daughters on the morrow, and she said, "I shall remain during January and February ; for your father, Ethel, has telegraphed and written to secure rooms at the hotel, and when you girls have finished your visit, you are to join me ; such a pleasant plan, all, but the leaving you, Lisbeth," she kindly added : "but you are such a quiet, busy girl this winter, improving your time so wisely, my dear, that you will scarcely miss us, and after our return we will have full two months together ; for I will not consent to your returning home before May."

"But I think I must go before then," Lisbeth remonstrated ; the longing for home had become so intense in her heart during the past few days.

"So your uncle told me you said to him last night," Mrs. Endicott replied ; "but I will

not hear of it. It makes me shiver to even think of that great lonely house by the sea, before the spring brightens it: no, you must not think of such a thing."

And then Mrs. Endicott became absorbed in her own plans for sudden departure.

By noon of the next day every arrangement was completed, and the travellers had driven from the door, nodding and smiling to little Lucille, who lightly tossed kisses from her dimpled hand to speed their journey, as she stood by Lisbeth's side in the drawing-room window to watch the carriage drive away.

So it happened that the usually gay company-thronged mansion was left quiet, except as Mr. Andrew Endicott came and went at his regular hours, and as little Lucille woke up echoes in the silent deserted rooms, with her gay laugh; flitting about like a glint of sunshine whenever she could escape from the somewhat rigorous vigilance of the governess, who now filled nurse Nora's place.

The January days crept by slowly to Lisbeth; she had resolutely refused to see her cousins'

friends who kindly came at first, hoping to cheer her loneliness. Bright girls many of them, with loving, warm hearts that would have comforted her if she had but known them, for she was very lonely; she needed comfort; there were hours when she said to herself—

“I am tired—tired of it all. And by that all she meant life; this girl of scarce nineteen years, who had wealth and a home, but who was yet so poor, wanting a father’s and mother’s love; needing so sorely that better, deeper love, the Heavenly Father’s, to fold her safe from the touch of earthly trouble; and who yet did not open her heart to let in that love, so willing to enter if she had but sought it.

February came at last, its first day a Sabbath, a cold, dreary day; the rain fell from morning till night in blinding torrents, mingled with sleet and now and then great feathery snow-flakes, that were “put out,” as little Lucille said, “by the naughty, naughty rain-drops.”

After dinner, which was earlier on the Sab-

IN THE MOUNTAINS.

so kindly came at first, hoping to relieve her loneliness. Bright girls many loved her, warm hearts that would have comforted her if she had but known she was very lonely; she needed these were hours when she said to herself—tired of it all. And by that time of life; this girl of scarce nineteen had wealth and a home, but who was so poor, wanting a father's and mother's love; needing so sorely that better, the Heavenly Father's, to fold her in the touch of earthly trouble; and who would open her heart to let in that love, if she had but sought it. It came at last, its first day, its dearest day.

My dear day; the first day of my life.

bath, Mr. Endicott went to his study, and Lisbeth and the child into the library, where they looked out of the window, watching the storm, and, later, the glimmer of lights that shone like stars down the broad avenue; for it was the lamplighters' hour.

But presently Lisbeth left the window and drew one of the softly-cushioned chairs before the glowing fire in the grate, that filled the room with flitting, dancing brightness. It reminded her of her home, she used to like so well to sit in the firelight. When a servant came to touch the gas-jets of the crystal chandelier into a dozen or more flames of brightness, she said—

"No, leave it dim; I like it better so;" and little Lucille, who was wont to wish whatever Lisbeth did, echoed the words, while, with the winsomeness of a child, she climbed into Lisbeth's arms, and nestled her curly head on her shoulder, saying—

"Tell me a story, a Sunday story; tell me all about Esau and Jacob?"

And Lisbeth told the story; but Lucille

wanted more than the details which she already well knew.

"Tell me," she asked, "what did Esau's birthright mean, what is a birthright?"

But before Lisbeth could reply, the child's bedtime came.

"And I must go," the little one exclaimed, "though going to sleep is so tiresome;" and she rubbed her bright eyes, saying, "I am sure they do not want to shut up, only, you know, mamma says they must shut every night when it grows dark, if I want them to be bright when I am a young lady, like Ethel's and Fanny's; but I would a great deal rather have them shine like yours, Lisbeth, only, why"—a child's question—"do your eyes look now as though they saw things other people did not? Have you lost your birthright, and are you looking for it?"

And merrily she laughed, the little, thoughtless child, calling out as she went dancing from the room—

"Have you lost your birthright, and are you looking for it?"

XXVIII.

THE words stand written: "A little child shall lead them;" and they are Bible words.

"Have you lost your birthright? are you looking for it?"

Over and over Lisbeth repeated Lucille's question, and, as she repeated it, she felt again the stirring in her heart of a longing that was like the longing she used to feel, before, as she termed it, she had lost her faith.

She felt those

"Deep-planted yearnings, seeking with a cry
Their meat from God;"

which come to earnest souls waking suddenly into life, when for a time they have seemed silenced, waking

"Like infants from their sleep,
That stretch their arms into the dark, and weep."

Yearnings that only one Voice can soothe, can answer.

"My birthright," Lisbeth murmured, "what is it? surely, surely, it is something more than the broad acres, the full bank accounts my father left me."

And in the hush of that hour it seemed to her as though she heard a voice; as though the whisper in her heart, which she had so often during the past few months striven to silence, spoke out loudly, saying—

"Yes, something more, something of dearer value than any wealth of land or gold."

"Have I lost it?" she softly queried; "tell me, have I lost it, and for what?"

Unflinchingly she met the answer of that voice in her heart, though in its sternness it was like the "axe at the root of the tree."

"No, not lost it," it said, "but dulled and dimmed it; for you accepted gladness by consenting to conceal it, and stooping to give a wrong impression regarding it when you knew by doing thus, you were losing from your soul the high standard of right and truth

permits it. No, I cannot give my heart to Christ now, while it is so full of rebellion; I must wait till it is better, wait till I have learned submission; I cannot give it to Him with all this bitterness in it," and yet, while thus she said, she knew the bitterness would only go, the submission only come, as she gave it.

Yet, though Elizabeth Endicott shut her heart that night against the heavenly gift of peace, she never lost the memory of little Lucille's question; never lost the consciousness, that when she refused to listen to the warning of conscience, she was forfeiting by her own act the heavenly gift of her birthright, liberty through Christ, who alone can lift the soul above the bondage of sin and doubt, the "Sun of Righteousness," that alone can draw and absorb in its refulgent beams the mists of human doubt and human sorrow.

Lisbeth was so lost in thought, she did not hear the opening of the library door, did not notice Alexander Gordon's entrance. He stood

full five minutes before the still glowing fire in the grate before she heeded his presence, and when she did, she hardly responded to his kindly words and half apologetic excuse for being there.

"Not finding your uncle in the study," he said, "I thought he might be here."

"No," Lisbeth answered, and she did not ask Mr. Gordon to stay, yet he lingered.

As she looked up at him, standing in the warm glow of the firelight, with the look of strength and calm patience on his face,—that had become its abiding expression since love for her had taken such deep root in his heart,—the impulse, the old feeling she never had defined, that he could help her in time of perplexity, gained mastery over the shrinking from him that she had felt ever since that last evening of the old year.

And with something of her former manner, a half child-like playfulness, blended with a sweet, trustful confidence that made her, she little knew how dear to Alexander Gordon, she said—

"Please do not laugh at me, Mr. Gordon, but tell me, what is conscience? Such a Sunday question," she added, while the earnestness in her voice and look contradicted the apparent lightness of the last words.

He stood leaning with his elbow on the marble mantel, and looking down at her as he answered, and with one of those freaks of memory which we none of us can account for, the recollection of him as he stood there was vivid to her to the very last day of her life, as though it had been a portrait that every day she could gaze on.

"There is an old story," he said, "of a great and good man who tells a reminiscence of his childhood, which will answer your question, Miss Lisbeth, better than I can.

"'When I was a little boy,' he says, 'one fine day in spring my father led me by the hand to a distant part of the farm, but soon sent me home alone. On the way I had to pass a little pond, then spreading its waters wide; a rhodora in full bloom, a rare flower which grew only in that locality, attracted my

attention, and drew me to the spot. I saw a little tortoise sunning himself in the shallow water at the roots of the flaming shrub; I lifted the stick I had in my hand, to strike the harmless thing, for though I had never killed any creature, yet I had seen other boys do so, and I felt a disposition to follow their wicked examples. But all at once something checked my little arm, and a voice within me said, clear and loud, "It is wrong." I held my uplifted stick in wonder at the new emotion; the consciousness of an involuntary, but inward check upon my actions, till the tortoise and the rhodora both vanished from my sight. I hastened home and told the tale to my mother, and asked her what it was that told me it was wrong; she wiped a tear from her eye, and taking me in her arms, said—

““Some men call it conscience, but I prefer to call it the voice of God in the soul of man. If you listen and obey it, then it will speak clearer and clearer, and always guide you right, but if you turn a deaf ear, or disobey,

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then it will fade out, little by little, and leave you in the dark, and without a guide." "

As Mr. Gordon ceased speaking, Lisbeth, she hardly knew why, was weeping quietly, and then, perhaps it was the influence of the dim, tender light in the room, the quiet and the hush of it; perhaps because it was a relief to speak out the question that had been in her heart for weeks; perhaps the comfort of human companionship and sympathy after having been so lonely; or all combined, that led her to ask still another question.

"Tell me," she said again.

"Tell me," two little words that had ever prefaced so many of her remarks to Mr. Gordon.

"Tell me, must we forget injuries to forgive them; you know, it says in the Bible, when God forgives for Christ's sake, sins are 'remembered no more, blotted out;' must we do the same with the sins against ourselves, forget, if we really forgive? For if we must I cannot do it," she added, with her old impetuousness of manner. "No, I cannot do it, and till I do I cannot pray."

"There is only one way you can do it, Lisbeth," Mr. Gordon replied, "and that is by asking Christ to help you, ask Him, even if you do not call it prayer, and then do not look backward to your past, nor onward to your future, but only upward, and remember you cannot learn the heavenly language all at once, never fully while here on earth ; but, nevertheless, 'it is sweet to stammer one letter of the Eternal's language called forgiveness. And I think you can do that even now."

"No, not yet," Lisbeth replied, "not yet."

As she thus spoke the door opened, and Mr. Andrew Endicott entered ; a minute afterward the room was bright with light, as he turned the tiny sparks of subdued radiance in the globes of the chandelier into a full brilliancy of glow.

But in that minute Lisbeth slipped away.

XXIX.

IT so often happens that there come days in our lives, by which we are prepared for what is coming by some circumstance or conversation scarcely heeded at the time, days, that afterward shine in memory like beacon fires, flashing light from hill-top to hill-top of our after days, even though they leave the valleys between in shadow and darkness. That Sabbath-evening talk with Mr. Gordon proved thus to Elizabeth Endicott, not that she stayed up on the hill-top to which he led her, for, alas, she went far down into valley-lands of mists and shadow after it.

But the day following was full of earnest thoughts, illumined, many of them, with a clearer light than she had for long known. Yet Lisbeth's story of that day's thought and experience, was much the same in substance as the old story of the Garden and the Tree.

Her eyes were opened; conscience opened them; but like Eve of old she looked at self rather than the Lord; and all self could show was a heart so unlike the heart of her childhood, a heart full of rebellion and doubt, a heart that had lost its rich treasure of truth. For wrongdoing is ever so much a thing of comparison; to the one of high aim and lofty soul, a slight error is as great as some deed of evil import to one whose standard is mean and dwarfed.

And looking at self Lisbeth shut herself from the Light again, though she was so near it, for, "How can the sense of what we *are* ever bring us to God, if not accomplished by the faith of what God *is*?"

Many are led astray by this; they think conscience will lead them to God, and because it is God's voice in the heart, it does give birth to certain efforts toward realising the condition which it desires; but alone, it cannot lift out of darkness, for we repeat, not the consciousness of what we are, but the revelation of what God is, can lift us up above self, and we

can only gain that revelation through the cross of Christ, only gain it by "looking unto Jesus."

Almost as on the evening before did Lisbeth lift that gaze of faith; almost did she again determine to leave the questions that puzzled her, with Him; but only almost, and yet the light from that half-determination shone on her face when she entered the drawing-room, late in the afternoon, to greet her uncle's friends, for Mr. Endicott had invited guests to dine that day.

Great was Lisbeth's pleasure to find them old friends of her father's and her own. Judge and Mrs. Hancock, whose residence was but a few miles distant from the Grange. (Lisbeth's home by the sea.) She had laid aside for that evening her wonted robe of heavy mourning, wearing in its place a soft, snowy-white cashmere.

Her father had always liked to see her in white, and it was with a thought of him she had chosen the dress.

Lisbeth remembered, too, Mrs. Blinn's tell-

ing her of how her mother, during all that year of married life, had worn naught but white; and of how, once, Mrs. Blinn had unfolded and shown her the dainty garments laid away so carefully, with lavender and rose-leaves in the cedar chest in the store-room. India muslins, fine as gossamer, with delicate frills of quaint old lace for summer wear; costly fabrics of china cr pe for the cooler days of autumn and spring; with soft cashmeres like her own for winter.

"I would so like to look like my mother," she said, as she fastened her still only ornament, the golden star, that had been her father's gift on her sixteenth birthday.

She never looked more lovely than she did then; the hurt of Sylvester Ingham's faithlessness was still as keen in her heart, and the bitterness of an undefined, but recognised treachery on Ethel's part was still there too, but somehow, that day, she had succeeded in overlaying Mr. Ingham's fault with blame for herself, and "I can bear it," she said, "if I need not blame him."

She clung so to her ideal of the man she loved ; clung so to her dream of all she thought him, and she was at an age when dreams are easily confused with realities ; she had felt, too, almost a thrill of genuine forgiveness for Ethel ; and Lisbeth's heart and feelings had always had a way of reflecting themselves on her fair face ; thus no wonder the half peace in her heart shone there.

The dinner was a cheerful, informal meal ; Mr. Endicott did not care as his wife did for the established rules of etiquette, and when the substantial courses were removed, and the table was glowing at last like a smiling centre of blooming flowers and tropical fruits, he dismissed the servants, while he and his guests lingered to enjoy a full hour of pleasant intercourse.

Little Lucille was sent for, though it was late for the child to appear downstairs ; Mrs. Hancock had begged for her presence ; she looked like a fairy child as she sat on her father's knee, with her golden curls resting against his shoulder, and her bright, wide-

open eyes, wandering from one and another of the smiling countenances that surrounded the table.

Alexander Gordon made one of the company, and it so filled his heart with gladness to see Lisbeth brightening under the genial influence of her old friends, that he laid aside his customary reserve when among strangers, and not one of them all was so bright and keen in brilliancy of wit and thought.

The smile with which Lisbeth had replied to some word of his, was still lingering about her lips, as sunshine plays over flowers, when her uncle said abruptly—

“O Lisbeth! I forgot to tell you a budget of news came to me this morning in your aunt’s letter, and chief and foremost, what do you think?”

“Indeed, uncle, I do not know,” she answered.

“Well!” and Mr. Endicott only half looked at her as he replied: “Nothing less than Ethel’s engagement to”—— and as he spoke, Lisbeth’s heart seemed to stand still; she

felt a sudden faintness, everything grew dim before her, the colour faded from her cheeks, the light from her eyes, it was a momentary feeling, almost over before her uncle had added, "to Sylvester Ingham."

And then Mr. Endicott turned from Lisbeth to explain to Mrs. Hancock that Mr. Ingham was an old friend ; to say, as his wife expressed it in her letter, "It was a most suitable engagement in every respect, though he was somewhat older than Ethel."

After that the conversation went on gaily as before, only Alexander Gordon had noted the sudden paling of Lisbeth's face, the lifting of her little hand before her eyes as though to shut away some sight of pain, or to hide it. The very same motion that had touched him so, that evening when they passed under the flaring gas-light, when leaving the park.

That was the only sign she gave, and in less time than it takes to tell she was talking again, even smiling, as she replied to a question of Judge Hancock's. But there had come a certain sharpness into her tone, unlike the

wonted song-like music of her voice ; while her eyes, that before her uncle's words had been so bright with a soft, lustrous light, flashed now like fire-sparks ; and her cheeks glowed again, but with an unusual colour, while she assumed a sudden dignity and poise quite unlike herself.

No sooner did little Lucille's wandering gaze rest on Lisbeth than she saw this quick change ; and with a child's delight in what seemed to reveal a new beauty in the cousin she loved, and a child's unconsciousness of causing pain, eagerly she exclaimed—

“Papa, look, look at cousin, what has come into her face ; I think”—and she laughed at her own words, “she looks like a queen to-night ; I think I will her call Queen Bess.”

And Lisbeth, the girl who till so recently had been as unlearned in concealment as a bird is in the science of song, smiled at the words ; while with a gracious inclination of her head, she said—

“And I will call you in return, Lucille, our

fairy—come, little fairy, lead Mrs. Hancock to the drawing-room.”

And she rose from the table with a new dignity and pride that for the time seemed to transform her.

Mr. Endicott and Judge Hancock soon followed the ladies, and only half-an-hour later Lisbeth was left alone; for her uncle and his friends had an evening engagement, and Mr. Gordon had excused himself from the dinner-table, without even entering the drawing-room.

Left alone! and then—she was but a girl, a young thing—it was her first experience in trusting and being deceived, that bitterest of all life's lessons, for till that hour she had had the lingering comfort of excusing Mr. Ingham; but now that was taken from her. Was it strange that there closed in about her heart then, mists heavier and darker than any that had been before?

Strange that the old doubts of God's love, when He permitted wrong and sorrow, doubts fostered by Mr. Ingham's scepticisms, to which she had hearkened, came flooding into her

memory, swiftly as clouds float across the blue sky when driven by wind and storm.

Was it strange?

And yet in that time of darkness she whispered words she had learned in her childhood, learned with only lip-knowledge, never by heart experience.

"All things work together for good to them that love God," but as she repeated them, bitterly she exclaimed, "Yes, but the promise is only to them who love God, and—I do not love Him." And then the mist grew heavier, more dense about Lisbeth,—the Light that had been so near her only a few hours before, seemed all shut away.

But there never was a mist yet, nor a cloud, that had not a light behind them!

XXX.

IF Mr. Andrew Endicott guessed aught of Lisbeth's story he gave no hint of it the next morning when they met, though unconsciously an added tenderness crept into his manner toward her, a something that reminded her of her father, as he held her tell-tale face between his hands, and gave her his good-morning kiss.

A wan, weary little face, for the sudden strength of a spirit too proud to show it suffered, that had shone from her eyes the night before, went out almost as speedily as it had flashed into life.

"I have a favour to ask, uncle," she said, "may I return home next week with Judge and Mrs. Hancock?"

"Go home!" Mr. Endicott replied; "why your aunt and cousins are to arrive that very day."

"Yes, I know," Lisbeth murmured wearily ;
"but may I go?"

And he consented, for something in her look pleaded more effectively than many words. So it was decided, and that very morning Lisbeth sent flying across the wide stretch of miles that divided her from home a swift-winged message to Mrs. Blinn, telling only a week from that day she would be there.

A missive that brought much consternation to the good housekeeper, for as is the way with love, spite her joy at the thought of Lisbeth's speedy coming, she fell into wondering what brought the child so unexpectedly, for child she still called her, surmising a thousand reasons, all as far from the truth as the flowers of summer were from the dry leafless stalks of the garden borders.

"Any way," as she told her still prime counsellor and confidant, Mrs. Grant, "it will be a great comfort to have the child safe again in the home nest, though, poor lamb, how she will ever stand missing her father, when she comes back to the loneliness, is more than ever I can

tell," and, kindly women that they were, they let fall more than one tear of sympathy for the lonely girl.

Mrs. Blinn's efforts to give a look of cheer to the old home were unwearying, and she was warmly aided in them by the faithful servants, who loved Lisbeth nearly as well as she did.

Touchingly tender were those preparations, shared by the friendly neighbours, and even the fisher-folk; for more than one brought some simple offering to make it look "a bit cheery to Miss Lisbeth," as old Captain Haight, the one-armed sailor, said, as he deposited on the table a glowing branch of red coral, across which, by ingenious skill, had been fastened a miniature leaf-like spray of pure white.

Every village child, as well as fisher lad and lassie, loved Captain Haight, and following his example, they, too, brought tokens of welcome for Lisbeth.

Thus a great heap of wave-polished stones and shells, some bright with rainbow brightness, some dull and lustreless, lay on the hall

table mingled with tangled bits of dried seaweeds, of all the varying colours those flowers of the sea catch with the changing seasons.

Blooming plants were rare in winter in that bleak region, and yet there were no lack of them to enliven the Grange on Lisbeth's arrival ; for the village matrons and maidens vied with one another in floral offerings, taken from their own sunny window-nooks, and left with Mrs. Blinn, "for Miss Lisbeth."

There were no rare plants among them like those that adorned Mr. Andrew Endicott's home, yet were they any less dear, any less beautiful for that ? For what makes a flower's worth, the love it holds, or the beauty ? and there were, too, generous leaved geraniums all glowing with their scarlet blooms, and calla-lilies that were just opening wide their stately fonts of pureness.

"Easter flowers," Lisbeth used to call the lilies, would she do it now, would she, as then, remember the Easter gladness they heralded, before the day came ? Alas, no, for her heart was shut against the comfort of Easter's glad

heaven-born assurance, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

The Doctor's library had been closed all winter, so had Lisbeth's room; but without delay at the news of her speedy return, every blind was thrown wide open to catch the fleeting rays of the coveted winter sunshine.

Great fires, too, were kindled on the wide open hearths, and treasures taken from closet and sideboard, and brought into the light again, while books were laid upon the tables, and chairs, lounges, and sofas uncovered.

This was how they made ready for her, made ready with such a zestful eagerness, to have it all as cheerful as it could be in a home so desolated, that the week flew by to Mrs. Blinn and her assistants, while to Lisbeth it seemed well-nigh endless.

The longest week of all her life she thought, but the hour for departure came at last.

During that week she had moved about with so weary a step, such a worn, startled look on her pale face, that more than one asked—

"Are you ill, Miss Endicott?"—words that

her uncle repeated constantly, and yet she uttered no word of explanation; she braved the penalty of his misunderstanding, and interpreting the change that had come over her to jealousy of Ethel, or some girlish caprice, rather than by a word let blame fall on Mr Ingham, saying to herself over and over, "I will not tell in my sorrow the secret I promised to keep in my joy; and I brought it all on myself, all on myself!"

Sorry comfort, but she always repeated those words after murmuring—

"I never will tell why I am changed."

If Lisbeth's nature had been less earnest she would have suffered less; but all the intensity of her feelings were wrought upon by the sequel to Mr. Ingham's wearying of her, which in her humbleness she had accepted as but natural, proving to be, after all, his desire to engage himself to another. "And did he say the same things to Ethel as to me?" she wondered.

There was a contradictoriness in Lisbeth's longing to go home, for she half shrank from it

too; and this she fully realised as the day of her journey waned, and the swiftly speeding train drew near the low marsh lands that skirted the approach to G—.

A contradictoriness that came from her consciousness of how much she had changed since she bade farewell to the familiar place.

"I am not the Lisbeth that went away," she sighed; "not Lisbeth whom my father called his Lily-bell; not kindly Mrs Blinn's Lady-bird, but a cold, frozen-hearted Elizabeth, a girl who has trusted and been deceived, no longer a petulant wayward child, naughty one minute, sorry the next, but hard and unforgiving now; a girl whose heart is stained by having acted a falsehood, and my father loved truth so; whose heart is shut away from God by having admitted and hearkened to theories and thoughts that have bewildered, oh, so bewildered me; till now I hardly know what I do believe in;" and her tears fell like rain as she leaned her weary head against the frame of the car window, and looked out on the gathering darkness.

All suddenly it came back to her, how as she

went away from her childhood's home she had made what her girlish fancy had called a "heart grave," in which to treasure the dear, dear memories of her father's love ; a place embalmed with loving, grateful thoughts, more fragrant than any flowers of earthly bloom.

"And now," she said to herself, "I am coming home again with another grave, poor little heart, a grave over which there are no flowers to strew. It is all so changed since I went away, for then"——

Even as Lisbeth thus thought warm arms were clasped about her, her head pillowed once more on kindly Mrs. Blinn's shoulder ; and then a hurried good-bye to Judge and Mrs. Hancock ; a welcome from many a familiar voice, followed by a swift drive ; the turn at the well-known gate, the threshold crossed ; the glow of firelight and warmth, the home-glow, and Lisbeth's second journey was ended.

XXXI.

IN Elizabeth Endicott's heart, as a tiny "blade of green," was the first upspringing of faith in God, where had been doubt and rebellion. But it was a tender thing, so slight and feeble; not for long did it push its way through the mists of unbelief, which brooded like birds of ill omen about her. And yet its rooting and budding made one of the three events, that like head-lands on some low-lying shore, stood out in bold prominence amid the events of the quiet years; full five, that followed her return home.

Not empty years, though they seemed so uneventful, so monotonous, with their days

"One after one to-morrow like to-day."

Doctor Endicott's long-ago words had proved true, when in reply to Mrs. Blinn's

remonstrance, that the child needed discipline, he had said—

“The discipline will come in good time, and the self-control too; my little Lisbeth has plenty of force and character.”

For though after her return home she went about for a time like one in a dream, with a languid indifference to all that surrounded her, spring had scarce melted into summer before her healthful, pure nature asserted itself, and she bravely took up her customary occupation; resumed her visits of kindly interest among the sick and poor in the hamlet below the cliff, and among the village people.

And though what had once been pleasure had now become a duty, that she performed with a dull mechanical sense of routine, her way was ever so sweet and winsome, she won love, even though those days she was often fitful in temper, wayward in caprice, sometimes sad and silent, sometimes mockingly gay.

She resumed her studies, too, and she opened the long-closed piano, and now and

then, though but rarely, she swept her fingers across the chords of her harp, bringing out wild, plaintive strains of contradictory harmony.

But she never once, all those years, took into her hands the palette and brushes she used to love so well.

"I can paint no more pictures," she said, when Mrs. Blinn urged her to resume the old favourite amusement, adding softly, "I cannot, for I dream no more dreams."

Mrs. Blinn, with the instinctive delicacy born out of her love for the girl, never asked Lisbeth the cause of her sudden return home, much as she longed to know; and tacitly they agreed not to talk of the months of her absence.

But once, just as the spring was budding, the good woman lingered by the half-open door of Lisbeth's room; she was within, kneeling by the window in her old child-time position, with her elbows on the broad sill, and her face on her hands; she was looking seaward, and as in the child-time she was

singing as she looked,—a low song,—quaint verses, for which she had found a melody in her own heart ; and somehow, from that song, Mrs. Blinn knew as much of the story of Lisbeth's trial as she needed, to make her tender as a mother to the young thing.

This song was only this :

“ There grows an ash by my bour door,
And a' its boughs are buskit braw
In fairest weeds o' simmer green,
And birds sit singing on them a'.
But cease your sangs, ye blithesome birds,
An' o' your liltin' let me be ;
Ye bring deid simmers frae their graves
To weary me, to weary me !

“ There grows an ash by my bour door,
And a' its boughs are clad in snaw ;
The ice-drap hings at ilka twig,
And sad the nor' wind soughs thro' a'.
Oh, cease thy mane, thou norlan' wind ;
And o' thy wailin' let me be ;
Thou brings deid winters frae their graves
To weary me, to weary me !

“ Oh, I wad fain forget them a' ;
Remember'd guid but deepens ill,
As gleids o' licht far seen by nicht,
Mak' the near mirk but mirker still.

Then silent be, thou dear auld tree—
O' a' thy voices let me be ;
They bring the deid years frae their graves
To weary me, to weary me !”

The “new bright thing” which came to Lisbeth during those five years, she did not recognise till they had ended, though all the time it lay across her pathway. It came from a brief interview with Alexander Gordon. And the flowers that in her heart kept their “Sabbath-rest,” did not bloom till those years had ended too.

They sprang from a sermon by Mr. Grant, that was followed by, and linked with, a talk with old Captain Haight, the hero of the cliff, prefaced by,—the crown of sermon and talk,—a time of communing with her own heart and her Saviour. After which, for Elizabeth Endicott there were no more mists, no more half lifting of down-shutting fog, but clear Light. And yet life was full of storms for her, again sorrow encompassed her.

Alexander Gordon came often to the Grange during those years. The care of Doctor

Endicott's estate involved it ; and though Lisbeth was saved all possible thought after she came of age, consultations with her were sometimes necessary, as well as her signature to the long, dull law papers, that she always said were written in a dead language to her.

Though their meetings were so frequent, Mr. Gordon had never told Lisbeth of his love ; something in her manner, a frankness blended with a certain reserve, always silenced him even when he thought to speak.

But there came a spring-day when at last he did.

It was one of those fair days when the grass seemed never so green ; when anemones blue and white, and early violets, starred the turf ; when about everything there seemed hovering

“ That sense of distance, vague, and vast, and wide ;
Of boundless freedom, endless room for growth.”

Softly and gently its influence stole into Lisbeth's heart ; she had always been receptive to Nature's teachings, and though she knew

that Mr. Gordon (who had spent the day at the Grange on business) was to leave by the evening train, she lingered, even after the twilight began to gather, out in the open air, everything was so sweet to her. She sat down on the low stone wall which served as a boundary between the garden and the grassy common beyond. It was there that Mr. Gordon joined her.

"Are you tired, Lisbeth?" he said gently, as he came and stood by her side; "tired, child?"

He had fallen into the way of being tender to her, and he had always treated her as a child. Did he think of her as anything more? Lisbeth had never asked herself that question. But then he told her.

And she was so lonely, her heart was still so sad, though her outward manner had grown cheerful, that though she said nay to his words, though she shook her head as he repeated them, she left her hand, her little hand in his, and they were silent, while the twilight deepened, but it was a tender, almost glowing

twilight that closed about them at the ending of that spring-tide day.

Was Lisbeth thinking what she was doing? Did she mean aught by her mute acceptance of Alexander's Gordon's words, even while she said nay to them?

In truth she did not.

And yet on the morrow, if Mrs. Blinn had listened as she had one day nigh five years bygone to Lisbeth's song, she would perchance have known what Lisbeth herself did not then recognise; for as she knelt again before her window, looking out sea-ward through the budding boughs of the gently swaying ash, softly she sang once more a song addressed, not to the old tree this time, but to a tear-drop that rested on her hand—

“What's this? A tear, one only?
It blurs and troubles my gaze,
In my eye it has hung and lingered,
A relic of olden days.

“It had many shining sisters,
But away they all had passed,
Passed with my torments and rapture
In night on the driving blast.

“ Like a breath my very love, too,
Has faded and flown, alas !
So now, old, lonely tear-drop,
’Tis time thou, too, should pass ! ”

“ Such a foolish little song,” she said as it ended, and another tear fell, and yet she smiled, though not for weeks afterwards did she analyse what had led her to hum over those lines that she had read in a corner of a village newspaper.

XXXII.

LISBETH'S birthday again ! Lisbeth, whom we knew as a child, come at last to the twenty-third year of her life.

A June day, with a dawning as sweet as the dawning of that eighteenth birthday that stood for the record of so much to her.

Mrs. Blinn placed flowers on her table as she had done then—June roses, for every season since had brought blossoms, yet never the same roses ; for flowers, like life, never twice yield the same blooms—just as the sunshine after storms is never the same sunshine that preceded them.

Would we ask to have it ? or do we learn, in the pause-places between the blooming of the roses, between the storms and the sunshine, that which makes us say, " It is better as it is—better " ?

That year of 1861 the day fell on the Sab-

bath, and Lisbeth could but wonder as she listened to Mr. Grant's morning sermon if he remembered the date, and if she had been in his thoughts as he prepared the discourse.

She had held herself aloof from the old pastor during all the years since her return home; she knew she was far away from him in sympathy; for though now and then a glimmer of light had broken like a glint of brightness through the mists of doubt that encompassed her, there were still many perplexities in her heart, and she felt Mr. Grant could not help solve them, and yet he did that day.

The subject of his sermon was "Light in Darkness."

Such a contradictory subject Lisbeth thought as he announced it. His preface was—

"Let man be silent when God is dealing with him, for he cannot fathom God's inscrutable wisdom." And he set forth how, as intelligence dawns, we find ourselves hedged about by mystery, how we reach out after knowledge as children reach out after a rain-

bow, and grasp nothing. Why? because God purposely baffles our search? No; for "He calls us to walk with Him in light. He has set His works about us, to be a revelation to us of His power and glory. His Word He gives us to be the expression of His will and character, and to bring us into acquaintance with Himself. His Spirit He gives us to be a teacher and illuminator within; while by all His providential works He is training intelligence in us, and making us capable of knowledge. Thus, not with God, but with our own hearts, lies the doubting and the darkness that shuts us away from Him."

And in simple language Mr Grant had dwelt on the impossibility that mere human intelligence should learn, "in a few short years, to master the knowledge of God, and His universal kingdom;" then, on Christ's word: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

"We would see Jesus," softly the old pastor said: "'And then though the light of His felt presence in our souls may not take the form

of a solving of all mystery, a filling of every darkness with perfect light, yet he has had little experience of God who has not often felt how sometimes, with a question still unanswered, a doubt in the soul unsolved, the Father will fold about His doubting child a sense of Himself so deep, so true, so self-witnessing, that the child is content to carry his unanswered question, because of the unanswerable assurance of his Father which he has received.'"

"Lift, then, your gaze to Christ," earnestly Mr. Grant pleaded, "for not one look to Him will fail of a recognition; and in the darkness of your now clouded souls He will let fall rays of the blessed light, that only shines where FAITH abides. The light that seems so far off from you now, but that is so near.

"Eyes looking down, eyes looking up; hearts thinking of self and self's unworthiness; hearts remembering Christ and Christ's work of love; they are what plunge the soul in darkness, or lift it into light.

"Look up, then, up to Him; and though your onward path may be rough, faith will

reveal beyond the storms and clouds of earth, that Heavenly City where they have 'no need of the sun, neither of the moon, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.'

"But remember, only by looking to Jesus with faith in your heart, can you reach out and take His hand, and be lifted above earth's shadows into this spiritual day. Never by entering the 'field of supposed revelation' will you find it, for mysteries there are, like forest trees, reaching ever one above another higher and higher.

"Only by obeying Jesus will you understand Jesus; not by studying Him, but by doing His will, shall you learn how divine He is. Obedience completes itself in understanding.' And 'when led by Christ, we see God, it is as if the stunted, flowerless plants grew tall enough to stand up and look across all the miles that lie between, and see the glory of the perfect plant as it blooms in unhindered luxuriance in its southern home.'"

This was in substance Mr. Grant's sermon;

a sermon that was largely gathered from full and frankly acknowledged quotations from thinking men, in the thinking world ; for the old pastor felt, perhaps thus he could attract and rivet Lisbeth's attention, where words of his own might fail.

And her attention he did rivet, so earnestly, that in the afternoon of that quiet Sabbath, she took her Bible in her hand and sought her favourite seat, a crevice in the cliff, where she was quite hidden from sight, and yet could look miles and miles away across the wide ocean, and up into the wider sky.

As she passed down the narrow path that led to this retreat, she repeated two scraps of poetry that she had learned long ago, the first :

“ How perplex
Grows belief !
Well ! this clay-cold clod
Was man's heart !
Crumble it ; and what comes next ?
Is it God ? ”

The other lines followed as a sort of amen to the foregone :

“Thou art more than all
The shrines that hold Thee ; and our wisest creeds
Are but the lisings of a prattling child
To spell the Infinite.”

And then Lisbeth repeated the heavenly-inspired words: “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish.”

And He has promised, she murmured :
“Whosoever cometh unto Him, He will in nowise cast out.”

“Lord, help me to come.”

That was her prayer that hour.

Thus it happened, that, when Elizabeth Endicott turned homeward, in her soul, where doubts had been so many, there was peace at last.

No more mists, no more shadows for her, she was in sunshine. No more trying to make herself worthy ; but only Christ, and His righteousness, was now her plea.

XXXIII.

ON the summit of the cliff Lisbeth met old Captain Haight, and then it was that she had that talk with him, which she afterward linked with the memory of Mr. Grant's sermon.

"You have been seeing Sunday sights, I reckon, Miss Lisbeth, judging from the shining on your face," were the old man's greeting words.

And softly Lisbeth replied—

"I hope I am going to see them all the time now; week days too, Captain Haight, I have been asking God to keep me in the Light."

"Well, child, He will if you ask Him; but mind you remember there's a difference between *seeking* to enter into it, and *striving* to."

After a second Captain Haight spoke again, and continued without pause for many minutes.

"And so you are going," he said, "to set out as a Zionward pilgrim? Have you counted

the cost, Miss Lisbeth? Your journey will be a up-hill climb all the way; you see it can't nohow be otherwise, for the life you are entering on is a higher life than that you've been a leading; and no one ever yet went up higher without striving for it.

"I'm a poor man, unlearned as you know; there ain't so much as a commentator's volume in my house, though nowadays the world is full of explanations of Holy Writ, folks tell me; explanations that make the path to heaven so plain and smooth like, there don't seem to be no narrow way left no more.

"But I am a wandering; I was a saying it would be a up-hill climb to you all the way. Well, you always was a good climber from a child, specially when ye set your mind to it; and in this case you ain't got to climb alone, for always there's the Hand, reaching down from Heaven, to help you up and over the rough places, and the smooth, too, for I reckon you'll need aid every step of the way. And now, ain't it wonderful like, you can always have it just for the asking, and you will find,

‘if you do right, where you fear a yawning chasm, and a foaming torrent to cross, God will provide a bridge’ for you. He always does, I say, for them that trusts Him, and I speak from nigh on to fifty years’ experience. It’s my impression,” Captain Haight continued, “though as I was a saying, I ain’t got no learning, that there is a great significance in the frequent mention of mounts and mountains in Holy Scripture. Now think on it a bit ; just take an instance or two, beginning with Moses receiving the Law on Sinai, and then, afterwards, you know he caught that glimpse of the Promised Land from Pisgah’s summit.

“But with no more tarrying in the Old Testament, just look on to the New, and think how the Lord Jesus honoured the mounts. You remember His sermon, and you remember, too, how when the devil tempted the Holy One, he led Him to the top of a high mount apart ; there was the Transfiguration hill too.”

And the old man’s voice was full of reverent awe, as he added, “Above all, you remember Calvary ; and ye see, Miss Lisbeth, it

was by going up, climbing up, every one of them summits was reached.

"I have my thoughts, too," said Captain Haight, "about that verse regarding the valley of the shadow of death; I know folk say it means that time when the mortal part of a man is slipped off from him, like as a butterfly slips out from a chrysalis that it may soar away; dying *here*, as you might express it, to live *there*." And reverently the old man pointed upward; "but to my mind it stands as a type of the consciousness of one's sins, and wanderings from the Lord, which come over one as blinding as the darkness of the most shut-in valley ever I saw, when they pass through such an experience as yours has been this afternoon I reckon; for somehow, the light on your face, is that light which follows after darkness, which comes when one has been a passing through the valley of self-surrender to His will; and a finding His rod and staff a support, and help, a lifting one, like, out of the shadows that arise from remembering one's sins, into the sunshine of His forgiving love;

leastways I take it for granted this has been what you have been a passing through, Miss Lisbeth. But I reckon you have heard enough of the old man's preaching for one while, and yet one more thing I would like to call your attention to, it is this, that like Noah of old, Miss Lisbeth, the Lord this day has lifted you out of your past, and folded you, poor, tired child that you was before, safe in the Ark of His love. But He has given you as He did Noah, and does to all who enter that ark through the Door Christ Jesus, but one look-out place, and that is the sky-ward window; no more looking back on your past, your doubts and your wanderings; for like as if Noah had opened a down-looking window, or crevice, the waters of the flood would have come a rushing in; so if you look back you will find sin and unbelief a rushing in on you again; all you have got to do, I say, is to look up through the sky-ward window, and then every dove you let loose, for I reckon them doves mean prayers, will come a flying back to you with an olive leaf of peace, comfort, and help.

"But laws, child, the sun is a setting, and my old woman will be a thinking I have tumbled over the cliff, likes as not; I am getting that slow, and stumbling like, of late.

"The Lord bless you, Miss Lisbeth."

And without another word old Captain Haight had gone.

That night before Lisbeth went to sleep, she took from between her Bible leaves the bit of paper traced with her father's writing, which Mrs. Blinn had given her long ago, and as she read it she whispered softly: "I can say the last lines now; God has been so good to bring me to them," and she repeated:

"Shall we ever cease

To smile, that through such hot and silly strife

We came? That doubts and fears could grow so rife?

That we could fail to see how God's good hand

Our anchorings and our driftings planned?"

And then Lisbeth laid her cheek against the smooth paper; against her father's faded writing as she murmured: "Does my father know of to-day; I think he does; I think he does."

Did he?

XXXIV.

SUMMER flew speedily that year to Elizabeth Endicott. The violets, anemones, and wind-flowers out in the meadows and on the grassy road-sides, had given place to daisies, golden-rod, and purple-asters, almost before she knew the time of blooming roses was over and gone.

In July her uncle had brought little Lucille for a visit, and the child tarried with Lisbeth till the first days of autumn. Hardly a child any longer, for five years had wafted Lucille across so wide a stretch of time, that Lisbeth found the "child-beauty" of her memory, standing on the threshold of maidenhood.

Lucille's companionship was a delight to her; and the days seemed all sunny when together they wandered through the woodlands and the meadows, or climbed among the overhanging cliffs that lined the sandy beach,

which, when the tide was low, they would speed across to the reef at the harbour's entrance.—Sitting to rest on the high flat rock that capped the shelving stones below, till the water turned landward again.

Only one shadow fell across Lisbeth's pleasure all that time, and that came because Lucille still retained a child's heedlessness of her words and their import; and she let fall from time to time, in broken fragments, as she chatted of home, her mother and sisters, hints which told Lisbeth of a heartless man and a loveless woman. Lucille said nothing that was more defined than a picture in outline; in fact, not half as much as her uncle had more than once inferred, and yet Lisbeth knew from Lucille's words more than ever she had guessed from Mr. Endicott's.

She saw in them Sylvester Ingham, the man she had loved, portrayed as selfish and cynical; saw the glimpse of him that she had that day in the park, was in reality a reflection of his true self. She saw, too, Ethel grown hard and sarcastic, trying to hide a lonely heart

behind a coldly-smiling face ; and the sight caused Lisbeth sincere sorrow, so full and entire now was her forgiveness of Ethel and of Mr. Ingham.

Lucille's words brought back her own past to Lisbeth too, robed in the warm colours that had grown somewhat dim as years had come and gone. And after the child had left the Grange, and life settled down into its customary quiet routine, she pondered them.

It was after that pondering that Lisbeth made a discovery ; after it that she found,

"The man she had loved,
Not only from her present had withdrawn,
But from her past, and there was no such man,
There never had been."

"It was a dream," she said, "all a dream of my own fancy. I loved not him, but what I thought him." And then, as a sequel to that pondering and that discovery, straightway into Lisbeth's heart came a thought of Alexander Gordon, her friend for so many years, the man who had loved her longer than ever she guessed. She thought of how noble

and true he was, she thought,—and after her thoughts she knew.

Meanwhile though Lisbeth had never so longed for it before, Mr. Gordon did not come for weeks.

With the impatience of a child she wanted to tell him how the mists of doubt had gone from her heart, and perhaps something else.

But the late chrysanthemums, white and deep crimson, pink with glowing hearts of warmer hue, were nodding in the garden borders, where all the other flowers had folded their leaves for their long winter's sleep, before he came.

And then it was but for a brief stay, from morning on to noontide, at mid-day he had gone again.

"I have come to say farewell," he told her, adding in a gentle tone—

"On the morrow my march begins; with the dawn my regiment is off."

Lisbeth knew full well what those words meant, for since the spring more than one throb of the nation's heart-beat of strife had

vibrated even in that quiet seaport town, and the farm lands beyond. More than one brave sailor lad and stalwart farmer boy had left their boats at anchor, their ploughs at rest, and gone forth to the war.

In a brief six months partings had become such a common thing, farewells so familiar!

"Yes, I am going," Mr. Gordon said, and he laid his hand on the insignia of his rank, the glowing badge of a colonel, that marked the soldier's coat he wore.

As he spoke he looked at Lisbeth with a pleading in his gaze; a tenderness she never forgot.

But though no longer a stranger to the feeling in her heart for him, though she had so longed to say to him—

"The mists have gone from my soul; I am in the light of God's recognised love for me;" she let him go without a word, she walked with him down to the garden gate, silent all the time.

At the gate he paused, and again he looked at her; looked down into her uplifted eyes with a gaze that ever after Lisbeth "wore in her soul."

Did he read her discovery there? surely, surely; though she kept it out of her speech, it must have looked from her eyes.

All he said was—

“If the time ever comes, Lisbeth, my Lisbeth, when you have aught to tell me, will you do it?”

As she bowed her head in mute assent, he lifted it, and kissed her forehead.

That was their parting.

Then the gate closed between them—he had gone.

Sharp and loud sounded the clatter of the horses' hoofs on the hard road; Alexander Gordon had gone; “Gone to the cruel war,” over and over Lisbeth said as the day wore on; and yet, though she wept, in her heart the “fresh burst of song, fresh joy revealing,” was smiling even amid her tears.

“I will write and tell him all,” she said, “next week I will write.”

But in those war days, next week—it was such an uncertain thing.

XXXV.

SCARCE a summer and an autumn ; it seemed a brief time for that " new song " to carol through Elizabeth Endicott's heart its strains of gladness, and yet all its jubilant songs ended with the autumn, hushed their gladsome notes and grew silent, only one short week after Mr. Gordon's farewell to her.

But only the songs were for ever silenced ; the joy was a more abiding guest, for while its earthly measured happiness was of so narrow a span, the green shoots of faith in her heart, that had sprung up into plants of hardy growth since that early summer-time Sabbath, laid hold of the broken tendrils, the drooping flower buds and blossoms of gladness ; laid hold and tenderly supported them on their strong life-full branches and stems, till they lifted them up above the sorrows of earth ; so far above,

that earthly parting came to mean to Lisbeth heavenly-meeting.

But not all at once, submission, real true heart submission, that is not mere bowing to the inevitable, is never wont to be a quickly upward climbing growth in human hearts, not even when faith reaches out to support it.

But we anticipate.

Not till the very last day of the week following Mr. Gordon's departure, did Lisbeth seat herself to write the letter, that ever since she bade him good-bye had been ringing in her heart like the note of a joy-bell.

A woman's reserve held her back, while she longed with a child's impatience to pen the words.

"I will not send my message straightway it is asked," she said to herself, with one of her old bright half-wilful smiles; "I will not let it fly like some bird let loose from the prison cage which has held it captive."

"Glad little bird," she softly murmured, "that of its own sweet will flies straight and

swift to its home-nest in some safe enfolding branch of strong forest tree. "

And softer grew the light in her eyes, the smile about her lips, as she whispered—

" My home-nest, it is so sweet to know it is in his great strong heart of love."

And all suddenly, memory brought back to her the vision of Mr. Gordon as he had stood in her uncle's library five years before, leaning on the mantel and looking down at her.

It was strange, but Lisbeth that week never had one anxious or foreboding fear regarding his safety. She knew "wars, and rumour of wars," were taking tangible form in battle and carnage from sunrise to sunset of almost every day. She knew down on those battle-fields every freshly-arrived regiment was straightway pressed into active service, yet her heart for the time was as utterly oblivious of the possibility of danger for him, as a cloudless day that gives no hint of the morrow's storm, the storm that is coming nearer and nearer all the time.

The smile was still on her face as she sat

down before her writing-table, which stood near the open window in the library.

It was one of those rare autumn days that come like trailing clouds of glory, falling as benedictions from the departing summer, as the golden crimson and russet leaves had fallen from maple and oak.

Late autumn, and yet so warm the breeze that played about Lisbeth was soft and balmy as a summer-time breeze.

One of those still days, when far-away sounds seem near, she could hear the very words of the children at play under the cliff, could catch the very tune of the dull cadence of a fisherman's song, and yet his boat was far out in the bay. Up from the village, too, came floating a sound of mingled voices, sometimes broken by shouts and cheers, and then suddenly growing subdued.

If Lisbeth had listened she might almost have caught in the "subdued-times," the sound of a sob following the cheers, a sigh, so like a groan, close echoing the shouts.

But she paid no heed as she wrote now

one page and then another, with the smile still on her face. She paid no heed either to nature's sweet music, though she loved it well. The shadowy rustling sound of the leaves falling down from the old ash, the song of a late northward lingering bird, a mere chirp, and the faint undertone of cricket answering cricket; sounds that were blended in with that undefined hush of a still day, that makes one lift their hand and say,

"Hark! to the silence."

She paid no heed to it all, we repeat.

It was so glad a thing to her to write that letter, no wonder the smile lingered with its caressing brightness about her. For she was telling Mr. Gordon of what she knew would make him more glad even than her acknowledged love for him; she was telling of the Light that had been in her heart since the day when the mists of unbelief had lifted. "I do not think I am yet what you would call a Christian," she wrote, "though I do trust Christ; for, being a Christian, why, that would mean having a Christ-like soul, and if you

were to ask Mrs. Blinn, she would tell you, I am the same wilful, wayward Lisbeth. And if you were to look quite into my heart, you would see so much there, I cannot tell you how much, that ought not to be ; I seem never to get one step beyond those words of Paul's, 'For the good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do.'

"But, nevertheless, my old restless questioning of the why of God's dealing, my old rebellion is gone ; I seemed to lose it out of my heart when my eager desire to know what I did *not* believe, did *not* understand, gave place to the wonder and gladness of the much I *do* believe, and yet, that much is after all held, I think, in just the feeling, that like one of those little children of old that Christ took in His arms and blessed, so He holds me, and for Christ's sake, God loves me ; I am His child now, no longer a lonely orphan girl, but with a Father, a Heavenly Father to pity, guide, and help me rise above myself if I ask Him for Christ's sake ; just as He has lifted me out of my past unbelief, where doubts

lay so thick, and will hold me from falling into them again, even if sometimes, as old Captain Haight says, I find it an up-hill climb through a foggy way. You remember the old story of how Michael Angelo wore ever on his forehead, fastened in his artist's cap, a lighted candle, which always shone brightly on his work and kept his own shadow from falling on it. If I could always have thus the Light of Christ's felt presence ever falling onward on my path, keeping the shadow of self behind and out of sight, ah, what an easy climb it would be then! but, self and wrong creep forward so, just as I think I have left them quite behind.

"So you see I am not yet a Christian, only I am trying, I am trusting Christ.

"Shall I copy for you my song-creed?

"My heart is quiet with what I know,
With what I hope, is gay.

"And where I cannot set my faith,
Unknowing or unwise,
I say, 'If this be what *He* saith,
Here hidden treasure lies.'"

.

"Here Thou hast brought me—able now
To kiss Thy garment's hem,
Entirely to Thy will to bow,
And trust Thee even for them.

.

"Lord Jesus Christ, I know not how—
With this blue air, blue sea,
This yellow sand, that grassy brow,
All isolating me—

"My words to Thy heart should draw near,
My thoughts be heard by Thee;
But He who made the ear must hear,
Who made the eye must see.

"Thou mad'st the hand with which I write,
That sun descending slow
Through rosy gates, that purple light
On waves that shoreward go,

"Bowing their heads in golden spray,
As if Thy foot were near;
I think I know Thee, Lord, to-day.

.

"I know Thy Father—Thine and mine—
Thus Thy great word doth go:
If Thy great word the words combine,
I will not say, *Not so*.

"Lord, Thou hast much to make me yet,—
A feeble infant still:
Thy thoughts, Lord, in my bosom set,
Fulfil me of Thy will."

"But my letter grows so long, how will you find time to read it; will you carry it all day safe in your pocket? and then will you take it out and read by the light of a camp-fire, or by the light of the stars, which?

"There is just one thing more I would fain tell you, but somehow I cannot tell it in words. Do you remember what you said to me in the spring-time, when the twilight was about us, and the violets and anemones were just coming into bloom. Do you remember? I want to whisper the same words to you now. Are you glad? Your own words repeated, but in my voice now, mine, not yours. Are you glad?"

And Lisbeth looked up with a deepened glow on her face, a smile that was tremulous, looked up as though to meet Alexander Gordon's answering gaze, as though to hear his reply to her question, "Are you glad?"

"He seems so near to me to-day," she whispered, and then for long she mused. Was he near?

Who has not known in some intense hour of

life, the nearness of a heart from which they are separated by widely counted earth-miles. Does it mean nothing ?

There was never another word written in that letter ; it was left unfinished, never sent.

Suddenly, with an impulse that seemed a something beyond her control, Lisbeth rose and stood before the open window ; she had become conscious of a certain change, what was it, something she missed, or some new sound she heard ?

The sun was still shining, the sea waves dancing and rippling beneath its golden beams. But the children at play, the fisherman singing in his boat in the bay, they were silent, while up from the village came still the dull mingling of voices, ending, she heard it at last, in something that sounded like a wail of grief ; she looked toward the cliff, looked just in time to catch one glimpse of the gentle swaying of the nation's flag, from the topmost point of the upright staff that surmounted the rocky pro-

montory, one glimpse, for even as she looked, slowly, slowly it was lowered, slowly, and at half-mast it halted; and then, sounded out over the sun-kissed sea-waves, over the fisher's hamlet, and the broad farm lands, the notes of the church bell, and its echo-note from the light-house tower, so slowly, so steadily, it tolled, carrying with its every stroke a heart-break into homes for miles and miles away.

"News from the war," she exclaimed, and she speeded out of the open door, and down the garden walk, but at the gate she met Mrs. Blinn returning from the village.

"Come home, child," she said, "come home," and though she was wont to be so yielding to Lisbeth's will, she laid a firm restraining touch on the girl's shoulder, and led her within the home shelter again.

Lisbeth yielded, whispering like a frightened child—

"Tell me, what is it all?"

"There's news of a battle, a glorious victory, they call it," Mrs. Blinn replied, in sob-broken tones; "but, child, among the foremost ranks

that won that victory were our boys ;” and by our boys she meant the brave fisher and farmer lads who, only three months before, had marched away from that quiet village with waving flags and beating drums. “Our boys, and there is sore mourning, child, sore mourning come to us ;” and even as Mrs. Blinn spoke the air vibrated with the sound of weeping women and sobbing children, weeping for the sons, the brothers, who would never come home again ! Never again.

“But you have not told me all,” Lisbeth said, half an hour later, as she lifted her gaze once more to Mrs. Blinn’s face. “There were other regiments in that battle ; tell me ?”

And then a sudden trembling shook Mrs. Blinn’s frame, like the wind that shakes a reed by the roadside.

“Not all,” Lisbeth repeated, and she reached out her hand, the little hand that had flitted so lightly over the paper as she wrote only an hour before—only an hour—reached it out, and Mrs Blinn laid in it the brief message, one of

the many, many messages that had flashed woe that day from South to North.

So brief ; just the words :

“ Mortally wounded ; Colonel Alexander Gordon ; by his request you are informed.

“ LIEUTENANT N. B. PECK.”

That was all.

XXXVI.

SILENCE,—utter silence in the room ; broken only by Mrs. Blinn's smothered sobs.

Silence that lasted till the minutes counted full ten, and then Lisbeth spoke, so calmly, so quietly, none said nay to her words.

"I am going to him," she said.

And she glanced toward Mrs. Blinn, and the faithful servants grouped about the open doorway.

"Going," she repeated. "Make ready to accompany me," and her words were addressed to Peter Skiff, the steward, who had grown old in her father's service before she became mistress.

And then Lisbeth gave one and another direction, not forgetting the minutest detail ; with her own hands she wrote form after form for telegrams that were to precede her

arrival from point to point of her way, and secure the permission for her onward journey, which she knew strict military rule would require.

Without a word she set aside, by a mere shake of her head, Mrs. Blinn's pleading that her uncle should be sent for.

She seemed no longer the half-frightened, trembling girl, who had met Mrs. Blinn at the gate; the strength of her womanhood had so dawned within an hour.

With such promptness every arrangement was made, that scarcely had the last rays of sunset faded from the western horizon before Lisbeth was speeding on, and on.

She took no heed of the hours of that journey; sunlight and starlight, day and night, they seemed alike to her.

Two thoughts only held sway in her heart. The one, to be in time—in time for what? The other, Christ's promise: "My grace is sufficient, made perfect in weakness." She was so weak, so weak, though outwardly so calm and strong.

It was nearing nightfall when at last her journey ended; since noon it had been over a rough, deeply rutted, and jagged road, worn by the heavy artillery waggons and slow-going ambulances, freighted with their loads of wounded, dying men.

It was a strange scene that stretched out before Lisbeth, as at last Peter Skiff opened the door of the closely-shut vehicle, in which she had sat silent for hours with bowed head and clasped hands.

A broad plain stretching on and on, almost as far as she could see, till it faded into the dim outlying line of dense wood beyond. A field dotted from one boundary line to another with long rows of tents, and across which swiftly-moving figures flitted to and fro; some in bright shining uniforms that bespoke them new-comers; others in garments travel and battle-stained.

Lisbeth held in her hand as she alighted the bit of paper, the formal military order that had been granted at their last stopping-place, and that was to win admittance for her, where

admittance had been denied that day to many a pleading man and woman.

She knew Alexander Gordon was still on the camp-ground, for distinctly she had heard the assurance of it in reply to Peter Skiff's inquiry from an Orderly of an outlying guard only an hour before; knew it full well, for she had heard, too, the added words in a rough soldier's voice—

“Move him, if it's Colonel Gordon you are a asking after; there will be no moving for him till that 'er last move.”

It was an elderly officer, a courtly man, with a warm, tender heart, to whom Lisbeth handed the slip of “pass” paper, and yet he shook his head gravely as he read the words.

“I do not know,” he said, and he led her within the enclosure of his own tent that was just beyond the picket, and with a kindly word he left her alone, while she heard him send a hasty messenger for the attending surgeon, and then a whispered consultation, after which both

general and surgeon entered the tent together. Gently and kindly they told their decision, "Wait till morning."

"Return now, Miss Endicott," General N—— said, "to the barracks, only a mile distant ; they have been turned into a temporary hospital, and there you will find gentle women who, like angels of mercy, are ministering to our poor wounded boys, and to-morrow one of those gentle sisters will accompany you to Colonel's Gordon's side ; wait till morning."

But Lisbeth did not seem to hear the words, for she repeated—

"Take me to him now ; to-morrow will be too late ; take me now."

And for a moment her head was bowed low, and then as swiftly lifted, while softly,—so softly,—but distinctly, she said—

"Take me now, I—I was to have been his wife."

And somehow those officers, used though they were to hard sights, to speaking peremptory words of refusal, could not say nay to the pleading of Lisbeth ; and so they led her,

amid the deepening twilight, across the broken turf where grass blades and flowers lay crushed and heavy beneath "the dew of blood," across that field strewn with the signs of the deadly conflict, that had so recently rent the air with roar of cannon and groan of agony. And her feet did not falter, nor her hand tremble; firmly and steadily she walked by the old general's side, walked on till she came to the very spot where Alexander Gordon lay; on, till only the mere flapping of the tent's canvas door separated them—she was within a moment's nearness to him.

That night, for the second time in her life, Elizabeth Endicott watched by a silent form; and as at that first watch twilight had grown dim and faded, gone out, and night's darkness closed about her, so it did again.

Not till the dreariest hour of a watcher's vigil, the hour between midnight and dawn, did Alexander Gordon give one sign of consciousness; then he opened his eyes, as the

surgeon bent low and let fall on his face the flickering lamp light ; he stretched out his hand and Lisbeth took it, then the eyes closed again, but the hand-clasp did not loosen, not then,—not then.

Toward morning a sudden storm burst over the battle-field, heralded by wild wind, a gush of rain, flashing lightning and rolling thunder, louder than any cannon's roar.

A storm of an hour, for when the sun rose the thunder echoed far off among the distant hills; the dark clouds were cleft, as though a gateway opened for the rising sun.

It was then, just at sunrise, that again Alexander Gordon opened his eyes, while in a voice low and faint, he whispered—

“See, see, the sun-gate has opened; I must go, I must go.”

“His mind wanders,” gently the surgeon said.

Did it wander ?

He spoke again.

“Lisbeth, little Lisbeth ; child, I know—I know it all,” and such a wonderful smile

shone on the dying man's face as again he whispered—

“Lisbeth, I am holding it—Christ's hand, hold it too, Lisbeth, child.”

Then the sun-gate had closed; and at that moment a low roll of thunder was heard again, the clouds came back, but even as they came the morning sun flashed across their darkness, and over across that battle-field there arched a rainbow in the sky.

XXXVII.

FAR away from Lisbeth's home by the sea,
—far away on that southern plain, a
grave was made that day. There were hun-
dreds and hundreds of other graves around
it.

They marked it by only a rough cross of
wood, numbered and lettered.

And there they left it.

XXXVIII.

ONE week later there was a new-comer among the band of women, that sisterhood of saintly workers who went about softly ministering, as only women can do, to the dying wounded men who crowded every ward of the barrack hospital at B——.

A new-comer, a slender maiden, with a far-away look in her eyes, a holy calm in her face, and with such a power of soothing in her voice and touch that groans ceased, pain eased, as sweet and low she whispered words of comfort, or with her hands,—her small, tender, child-like hands,—loosened bandages, smoothed hard pillows, and stroked aching brows.

She never made any distinction as to whom she served; she never turned from the most revolting sight, or wildest cry of pain or delirium.

It made no difference whether the soldier

boy she tended had fallen in rank of Northern or Southern army. To her they were all brothers, for Christ's sake.

At first her task of ministry had been chiefly among the brave fisher and farmer lads of the regiment from G——, but as time went by their number grew less, for in that hospital there was never a day or night that some one did not "move on."

But as one and another departed they still called that gentle lady nurse, "Our Lily-maiden."

And she kept that name for long, for Elizabeth Endicott did not leave the hospital service till months numbered a year.

But at last she returned home, not to cease her ministries of love, for she found work awaiting her there too, tender, kindly work that she did so faithfully, that the fisher-folk down in the hamlet came at last to call her, "Our angel of the cliff;" while among the dwellers of the farm lands and the village she was still "Miss Lisbeth," only in softened voices they added, "our saint Elizabeth now."

"She always was a child of as many names as dearnesses," Mrs. Blinn said.

And yet there were those who, as Lisbeth entered the village church after that long absence, gazed at her, saying in low tones to one another—

"She cannot have felt it as we thought she would; see how calm her face is, peaceful as the face of a child, and after all she has been through!"

While there were others who said, "The girl's heart is broken."

Among these latter, the village Doctor, and Judge and Mrs. Hancock.

And still others said, as did old Captain Haight—

"The child has seen the Lord; only they who have seen Him, I say, bear that look on the face." And in a certain way they all spoke the truth.

On a morning not long following Lisbeth's return, she took into her hands again her palette and brushes, and when she laid them aside she left on a canvas, traced in letters

that every one held a rainbow colour, the words—

“Blessed be the God of all comfort, who comforteth us, in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”

Later on Lisbeth fastened that bit of canvas above the quaint cabinet, her mother's treasure, that still stood where sunbeams played about it, and on which there lay now only a little Bible, bullet pierced and torn.

A little Bible, against which night after night, “Lisbeth, our angel of the cliff, saint Elizabeth,” as they called her, laid her cheek and sobbed aloud ; for—

“As gold is tried by fire,
So a heart must be tried by pain,”

before ever it learns to say, “Not my will, but Thine, O God.”

Before ever it knows the calm Elizabeth Endicott came to know.



AFTERMATH.

“ Oh, her heart can see, her heart can see !
And its sight is strong, and swift, and free.
Never the ken of mortal eye
Could pierce so deep, and far, and high,
As the eager vision of hearts that dwell
In the lofty, sunlit citadel
Of Faith that overcomes the world,
With banners of Hope and Joy unfurled,
Garrisoned with God's perfect Peace,
Ringing with pœans that never cease,
Flooded with splendour bright and broad,
The glorious light of the Love of God.

“ Her heart can see ! her heart can see,
Beyond the glooms and the mystery,
Glimpses of glory, not far away,
Nearing and brightening day by day ;
Golden crystal and emerald bow,
Lustre of pearl and sapphire glow,
Sparkling river and healing tree,
Ever-green palms of victory,
Harp and crown and raiment white,
Holy and beautiful dwellers in light ;
A throne, and One thereon, whose Face
Is the glory of that glorious place.”

I.

Fifteen years since Elizabeth Endicott's twenty-third birthday, and the sunshine falls aslant her room now as then.

A maiden's room still, for Elizabeth Endicott will never be wife or mother.

Down to old age she will hearken alone, as in her youth-time, to the whispering leaves of the ash, and the murmur of the sea-waves on the shore.

Is she happy?

"God gives us happiness through ourselves; we are made happy by what we *are*, not by what we have.

II.

As in the dim and tender years of her childhood, the glad years of early youth, the shadowed years of later maidenhood, nature

had encompassed Elizabeth Endicott with its symbols of mystery, life with its problem of permitted wrong and permitted suffering ; so with the slow progress of the years there had come to her

“ The feeling which is evidence
That very near about us lies
The realm of spiritual mysteries.
.
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.
The mystery, dimly understood,
That love of God is love of good,
And, chiefly, its divinest trace
In Him of Nazareth's holy face ;
That to be saved is only this—
Salvation from our selfishness,
From more than elemental fire,
The soul's unsanctified desire,
From sin itself, and not the pain
That warns us of its chafing chain ;
That worship's deeper meaning lies
In mercy, and not sacrifice,
Not proud humilities of sense
And posturing of penitence,
But love's enforced obedience ;
That Book and Church and Day are given
For man, not God—for earth, not heaven—
The blessed means to holiest ends,
Not masters, but benignant friends ;
That the dear Christ dwells not afar,
The King of some remoter star, .

Listening, at times, with flattered ear,
To homage wrung from selfish fear.
But here, amidst the poor and blind,
The bound and suffering of our kind.
In works we do, in prayers we pray,
Life of our life, He lives to-day."

Is she happy?—

"We are made to be happy, but we are made also to find that happiness in the love of God and of our fellows."

III.

Only a stone's throw from Elizabeth's Endicott's home door, the gray rocks, the old cliff, still cast their shadow across the sea waves when the sun is westering; and when the day's work is done, and the light begins to grow dim, sometimes through the summer-clad garden walks she passes, seeking her old retreat, the crevice in the rock. And as she goes she sings, as was her wont of old.

A song born out of her Past; and the children at play in the meadows, and down on the sea-beach pause to listen. The youths

and the maidens whisper softly, "List;" while men and women, grown old and weary with life's journey, smile at one another as they hearken, saying, in low tones—

"It is Miss Lisbeth singing of the mist, though she is in the sunshine."

And over the sea waves, the meadow flowers and grass-blades, the song floats low and sweet—

THE SONG OF THE MIST.

"When the mists have rolled in splendour
From the beauty of the hills,
And the sunshine, warm and tender,
Falls in splendour on the rills,
We may read love's shining letter
In the rainbow of the spray;
We shall know each other better
When the mists have cleared away.
We shall know as we are known,
Never more to walk alone,
In the dawning of the morning,
When the mists have cleared away.

"When the mists have risen above us,
As our Father knows His own,
Face to face with those that love us,
We shall know as we are known ;

Low beyond the orient meadows
Floats the golden fringe of day ;
Heart to heart we hide the shadows
Till the mists have cleared away,
 We shall know as we are known,
 Never more to walk alone,
When the day of light is dawning
And the mists have cleared away."

Is she happy ?—

"Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job ; and have seen the end of the Lord ; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."

IV.

"Good is a better word than happiness in this world,
In the world to come, they will be synonymous."



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